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A Very Private Person

ARISTIDES

I am a very private person. My privacy means everything to me. If it didn't, I wouldn't say it—especially in print, before several thousand people. True, several thousand people are not, in the modern day, all that many people, certainly not when you consider the multitudes that watch television. I was once on "The Phil Donahue Show," where I had the chance to announce to millions that I was a very private person. I neglected to do so, though, and thus blew it, which I much regret. I shall not blow it again. I am, let me repeat, a very private person. It's important that you know this. Having established that, what would you like to hear about first: my neuroses or, what some might say is the same thing, my sex life? Or would you rather talk about how much money I earned last year, which, as it turns out, was a very good year for me?

With an unfailingly light touch, I parodize. Parodize now lost, let me say straightaway that anyone so silly as to call himself a private person, in public or in private, almost certainly isn't one. In the same way, I have often found that people who think themselves sensitive are capable of much greater cruelty than those who don't—their firm belief in their own sensitivity allows them to get away with so much more. But then brutality, I have heard it said, is often the other side of sentimentality, and so perhaps we should not be too stunned if we one day learn that the man who weekly places flowers on his wife's grave used to slap her around regularly when she was alive. Very private people—go figure 'em.

No one has ever looked me in the eye and told me directly that he or she is a very private person. Whenever I have noted it, it has been during an interview, either in the press or on television. I am a bit nutty on the subject of these very private persons because, of late, I have discovered that the form of the interview has become one that seems crude, even laughable, to me. Still, as they said about influenza during the 1919 epidemic, there's a lot of it—interviewing—going around. One can chew up a day watching television talk, which are essentially interview, shows: Phil, Oprah, Geraldo, and others less famous but no less odious. The interview may well be the form, the bloody leading genre, of our time. Famous writers have been known, when asked for a contribution to a magazine, to offer, instead of a piece of writing, an interview. Some writers have published entire books of their interviews. John Updike, reviewing Philip Roth's recent novel, *Operation Shylock*, remarks that theorists might argue that "life isn't packaged in plots anymore, and why shouldn't a novel be a series of interviews, in this interview-mad age." We are all, you might say, private persons now.

I have been on both sides of the interview—as interviewer and interviewee—and, though I would rather be interviewed than interview, I find the entire proposition, from both sides, mildly but genuinely corrupting. This is not to say that the interview, as a form, hasn't a function; it has. At the same time, though, it is almost never quite what, ideally, it is supposed to be: a way of conveying information gathered by competent journalists who ask pertinent questions of interesting people on subjects of general curiosity. Usually the people aren't interesting, the questions aren't pertinent, and the journalists aren't competent. Taken all together, this tends to make most interviews a mite less than ideal.

I am going to give a talk in a middle-sized, middle-western city next week, and earlier today I received a call requesting an interview by a reporter from the city's newspaper. The re-

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porter, whose voice I have on my answering machine, seems young, earnest, and quite decent. I am not sure how I am going to get out of this interview, though I am going to try. I suppose I ought to be honored to have been asked to be interviewed, but, somehow, I am not. What, after all, can possibly be the point of such an interview? I have not even the standard commercial excuse of flogging a book, for I have no new book for sale just now. I don't have any ideas for sale just now, either. I hope the reporter doesn't want to do the interview to get my scintillating notions about the state of the world, for I seem also to be fresh out of such notions. Perhaps I ought to give the interview anyhow, just to show the people of his city what a sweetheart I am, and so witty, too. But I find I'd rather devote the hour or so needed for the interview to reading Cavafy or to watching a baseball game on television or to the highly refined luxury of not thinking—let alone talking—about myself.

I make myself sound as if the paparazzi are at my bedroom windows, a producer from "60 Minutes" is always on the phone, and a wry woman reporter from the *New York Times* wants to buy my lunch, on her expense account, at "21" in exchange for my answering just five questions that she promises to give to me well in advance of our meeting. None of this is even close to the truth. Virgil Thomson, a man I much admired for his good sense and prose style, once said that every time he had the notion that he was famous he only had to go out into the world to be disabused of it. I don't even have to leave my apartment to come to the same conclusion.

Still, I feel like the heavy drinker I heard about not long ago, who suddenly stopped drinking at the age of fifty-five, declaring that he felt he had had "his share." About publicity, I feel that I, too, have had my share. I haven't had all that much publicity, but I really don't require any more. I like people who don't push it. I have great respect, for example, for Tom Lehrer and Julie London, two talented people who were able to do good work and quit when they were ahead and so never fell behind. I also respect people who are able to write one swell book and, never feeling the need to write another, close up shop. Why go on and on with it, sweaty, tongue hanging out, hounding after publicity, saying, as the bleak heroine of an Anita Brookner novel at one point does, "Look at me!"

"Methinks thou doth protest too much," I hear a voice cry out. "Is this really a serious problem for you, fella? How much publicity have you had, anyway?" By the standard of show business, not all that much. I have never been on the "Today" or the "Tonight" shows. I have never been the subject of an article in the *New York Times Magazine* or had my picture on the cover of *Time* or any other magazine. I haven't chatted with Larry King or Oprah. Such publicity as I have had has been fairly bush-league. I get called from time to time to go on radio talk shows that have some reasonable level of intellectual pretension. I have been asked to appear on the "MacNeil/Lehrer Report." I once did, as I mentioned, appear on the "Donahue" show—I believe it was in the same week that he had a show with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and another with transsexuals; I'm certain you can't have forgotten it. I have been interviewed on a specific subject on a few occasions in the *New York Times*, and I have been interviewed in connection with books I have written in the *Chicago Tribune* and *Washington Post*. I once had a profile written about me for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. I was interviewed at lunch at the Algonquin Hotel by a reporter from *Publishers Weekly*. *People*, in connection with a book I had written, did a quite dreary three-page spread on me.

All this has taken place over nearly two decades and is, I realize, peanuts to a really "very private person." But to me it has been a surfeit. At the end of each of these little publicity swims, I felt as if I had emerged from murky waters of my own polluting, seaweed in my mouth, something slightly slimy dangling from my ear.

Do understand that no one had to twist my arm for any of these minor media immersions. I do not want my brief affairs with the media to be likened, as was Edmund Wilson's flirtations with the Communist party in the early 1930s, to a Boston virgin getting on a streetcar. (Boston virgins, it occurs to me, may by now be rarer than Boston streetcars.) Behind most of my publicity dips was a fine impure motive of one sort or another: the wish to sell a book, or push a line, or gently assuage my own itchy vanity. Every time out, moreover, I knew what I was doing, which was, very specifically, a deal: my opinions, views, and carefully

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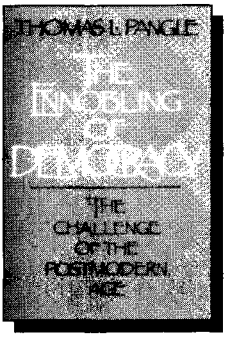

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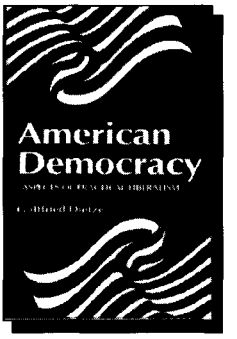

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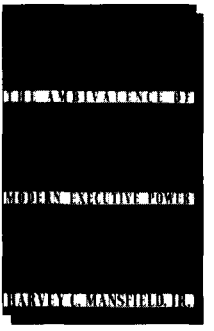

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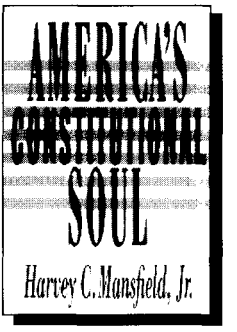

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rationed candor in exchange for public attention. What was in it for the journalists involved was copy, not very hot copy to be sure, but copy, which remains the only desideratum of the journalist. I, like many another fellow passing through town, was helping these various journalists to kill time (if they worked in electronic media) or to fill space (if they were print journalists).

"Killing Time and Filling Space" is the title I gave to a journal I kept nearly twenty years ago when I agreed to go on the road for my publisher at the time, E. P. Dutton, to sell a book I had written on the lugubrious subject of divorce. I haven't retained my itinerary of this publicity tour, but I recall that I was intensely scheduled: 11:00–11:10, author free—that sort of thing. I was sent to five cities—New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Baltimore, Washington—in five days, beginning with two days in New York. Interviews had been arranged in these cities for television, radio, and newspapers. Divorce was a good media subject in those days. It was still a social problem—the statistics were, as one might say, merely alarming—not yet a wretched commonplace and hence a catastrophe of American life. Everyone could muster opinions about it, and chat-show hosts—the word *hosts* suggests to me hosts and parasites, but in these matters it isn't quite clear who is who—didn't have to read my book to be able to talk about it. It was all splendidly media-able. I was like Herbert von Karajan, who, when asked where he wanted to go by a Paris cabbie into whose cab he had just stepped, is said to have remarked, "It doesn't matter. They want me everywhere."

Bits and pieces of those five days on the road talking about myself and my book have stayed in my mind for nearly two decades. I was on insult radio shows in New York that seemed to float on a cloud of pure hostility, most of it directed at the host; I ran into a very angry psychiatric social worker, a fellow guest on an afternoon television program in Pittsburgh, who, in the green room before the show, informed me that, as a young girl, she had to watch her father, a furrier, gas minks in the Pocono Mountains; I met with a hungover disc jockey in flowered pants at 6:45 A.M. in Cleveland who announced me as a guest, said I was prepared to answer everyone's questions about divorce, and proceeded to play a recording of "Two Against the World"; I was interviewed by a horny-handed journalist from New Jersey who asked me, in confidence, what I thought "these crazy broads nowadays want anyhow"; I was photographed by the *New York Times* while standing out in front of the St. Moritz Hotel, squinting into the sun, as people passing by shook their heads, expecting a celebrity but clearly not recognizing me; I recall lots of journalists' tics, among them reporters saying, "Yeh, yeh, I know what you mean" to my every utterance and, even more distracting, their anticipating how I would finish my sentences and finishing them along with me; I had, in Baltimore, a quotation from Mohammed attributed to me, but I decided to let it pass; I was asked many a trivially personal question about my social life and at one point found myself on a sappy television panel that was discussing living alone. Most of all, I remember an extreme, an almost furious, boredom, bordering on self-loathing, with my own endlessly repeated answers to not very penetrating questions.

I recall, too, that as I began that week of self-promotion I was concerned about how well I had done on each show. I didn't want to be a disappointing—you should pardon the expression—"guest." As I left, I said thanks and shook hands with the producers and hosts of these various shows. I assumed that a genuine contact had been made, a human relationship, however fleeting, formed. As the week progressed, though, this assumption disappeared. I would finish my bit, then get up and leave—off to my next show or interview, where I would repeat the by-now formulaic answers that I had been spouting all that day. No goodbyes, no nice-to-have-met-you's; another, a fresher and warmer body was waiting in the wings; and I had to freshen and warm up my own body during the cab ride to my next shot at self-promotion.

What was entailed in this sort of activity was, to adapt a phrase from Wordsworth, a willing suspension of humanity—on both sides, on mine and on that of the journalist with whom I was dealing. This was a problem for me, though, because I do not suspend my humanity so readily. I don't for a moment wish to pretend that I am a beautiful person, but when I meet someone it is necessary for me to believe in the possibility of our getting on together and perhaps even becoming friends. The out-of-town talk-show or newspaper inter-

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view seems, somehow, to preclude this. It was all cash-and-carry, ten cents a dance, here's your hat, what's your hurry.

Still, in the service of simple greed, I probably could have got through it all right—in fact, I did get through it all right—my lovely integrity and shining spirituality intact. But I had the additional problem of not being able to take myself, as an expert in my subject, quite seriously. Mark Twain defined an expert as a guy from out of town. Today he's a guy who has written a book. Certain of the talk shows I went on featured what were referred to as "call-ins," in which listeners called in their questions to the guest. Having written a book on divorce, I was supposed to be able not merely to answer but to solve all sorts of marital problems: sexual hang-ups, emotional maladjustments, punch-ups, financial disasters. I found myself frequently leaning into the microphone before me and saying that I really had no solution to the problem—that I thought maybe the solution was to be found in professional help (which I didn't believe, either). Like anyone of a fairly complex nature, I had too much contempt for myself to pose as an expert in matters where I was quite as lost as everyone else. But of course I was traveling around the country selling myself precisely as an expert. Husband beating you? Sex repulsive to you? Children heartbroken? Hey, no problem, I discuss those things in my book.

Lighten up, bro. Lightening up brings me to my other difficulty, which is that during interviews, either giving or receiving, I am altogether too impressed with the artificiality, and hence the silliness, of the entire activity. I have written only one piece of journalism that required an interview, and that interview lasted less than five minutes. Many years ago I was asked to write an article about a local gossip columnist who was very big in the city of Chicago, a man whom my friends and I had made fun of for his clichés and pomposity since we were in high school. I knew that my article was less than likely to be admiring. The point of the article was to try to understand how this man with so little ability, natural or acquired, had made such a great success. At the time, he had a national television talk show, his column was widely syndicated, he kept a room in his luxury-laden apartment for Harry Belafonte when the great calypso singer was in town. Failure can usually be explained, but certain successes—and his distinctly seemed one of them—remain a mystery.

My subject put himself at my disposal. This was the age of the New Journalism, which, like everything called New, would soon die out. But under the New Journalism journalists hung out with their subjects, spending vast amounts of time in their homes, talking with their relatives, generally prying into their lives as much as was permitted—and then a lot more. My subject asked if there was anything he could do for me to make my job easier. He was, after all, a journalist himself. I thanked him, saying that I might like to sit in the studio during his weekly television program, and that, if I thought of anything else, I should certainly be in touch about it. I suppose I could have asked to sleep in Harry Belafonte's pajamas.

I began the interview by asking what turned out to be my only question. "From where," I asked, "do you think your power derives?" He leaned back in the swivel chair in his office—his tie was loose—and, clasping his hands together behind his head, unloosed a flow of the dopiest fifth-hand clichés about the Fourth Estate I had heard in years. As he came to the sonorous conclusion of his answer—something about our fellow countrymen understanding the importance of a free press—I realized that any further questions would be hopeless. It was all I could do, in fact, to ask if he showed slides with the answer he had just given me. His shield of pomposity, I sensed, could not be punctured, at least not by me.

Gathering up my non-notes, I told him that he certainly gave me a lot to think about and that I would get back to him if I had any other questions. I saw him only one more time, at a taping of his television show, where his wife, in the green room, suggested I try one of the cookies laid out for guests on the coffee table, cookies that, she averred, were "simply orgasmic," a phrase I couldn't resist using in my published article. When the article appeared, my subject, in his column, called it "a scissors and paste job," rightly claiming that I scarcely interviewed him for more than five minutes.

Since it may be far from clear, let me say quickly that in telling this story I am trying to let myself off the moral hook for being just another journalist thug. I'm not sure that I have. I do, though, think that I would have been in even worse moral shape if I had spent

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lots of time with my subject, sat through meals with him, talked with his son, hung out in Harry's room—and then blasted him. Instead, saving the shoe leather, I just blasted him without hanging out, basing what I had written on decades of reading his columns and watching (in amazement) his television shows. Janet Malcolm, *The New Yorker* writer, has written that "every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible." Quite a bit to it, I fear.

One of the chief differences between human beings and animals, I have come increasingly to feel, is that human beings tend not to learn from experience. So one gray autumn morning, when a soothing female voice called, asking if I was the man who had recently written a book of short stories, I allowed—shucks, ma'am—that I had indeed written those stories. She broke into an impressive and unrelenting fusillade of praise for my writing, ending by saying that, however much she liked my stories, which as I may have noticed was quite a lot, her mother liked them even more. When I thanked her for her generous praise and asked what I could do for her—I was ready to give her three, maybe four pints of blood—she asked if she could interview me for the newspaper for which she worked. I said, with less hesitation than Walter Cronkite discovers the perfect platitude, yes, certainly, sure, of course, whenever you like, absolutely, yes, hell yes, finally stopping lest I repeat the entire Molly Bloom soliloquy at the end of *Ulysses*.

I do not read either of the two main newspapers published in my city. I prefer the *New York Times*, not because I think it so much better, but because it carries more obituaries about people from the world of art and culture; and who dies seems to me the only real news—or at least the only news that stays news, which, I believe, is how Ezra Pound defined literature. I was later told that this woman, as a journalist, had a reasonably high reputation for her stiletto work. Not having read her before, I did not know. Nor, I have to report, did I inquire. What journalist in her right mind, when you get right down to it, could resist my sophisticated yet wholesome charm? Besides, her mother was already on my side. The only question I considered before going into the interview was a less-than-complex one: sport jacket or suit? Perhaps you will think me naïve. But then I was still young—not yet sixty.

I fear that my previous paragraph makes it sound as if I were the victim of a hatchet job, blood and hair all over the walls. Not quite. I woke one Thursday morning and discovered, in a neighbor's paper, an enormous photograph of myself, in color, peering out from the front page of the *Chicago Tribune*'s Tempo section. The subhead on the piece read, "[Nicolai Aristides] is a bow-tied dandy with a street-kid muse." I read the piece, twice, in a fog of bewilderment. In it I figure as more than a little out of it; a great cultural snob; a man whose essays are "precious little things" ("an acquired taste, like marzipan"); smugly happy about my lack of fame, though maybe not so happy as all that. ("But obscurity doesn't bother him. Much.") Touches of physical description did not help. "'Life is very strange,' says Aristides, who with his oversize head and ears and trim little body looks like an intellectual Pee Wee Herman." Zap! Whap! Wham! In for a penny, I always say, in for a pounding. Hoist on my own foulard. My own self-vaunted charm seems not quite to have been entirely successful. Maybe I should have worn the sport jacket.

When Abe Hirschfield, who was briefly publisher of the *New York Post*, was asked how his interview with A. M. Rosenthal of the *New York Times* went, he answered: "He asked some questions, took some notes. I don't know what he's going to do with it. That's the gamble." And a gamble almost all publicity is, unless one is powerful enough to control it. By powerful enough I mean famous enough. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, for example, lays down strict ground rules before granting an interview, and these include: no tape recorders, no photographs, all questions limited to her professional life (as a book editor), approval of all quotations used, the prerogative not to answer any questions, and a trusted associate in attendance. If the journalist wants the interview badly enough, he accedes. Vladimir Nabokov did not "give" an interview so much as "make" an interview. Questions were prepared for him, which he answered, not in conversation, but in careful prose. These less-than-impromptu interviews were only conducted, moreover, by people Nabokov trusted.

On the few occasions I have given interviews, I have tried to control them through seeming winning. (The fact that I might actu-

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ally be winning was not allowed to get in the way.) I saw it as my job to make the person doing the interview think me an attractive and serious fellow who deserves to be treated with decency and respect. Once, on a rare occasion, when I had information that was badly wanted, I was able to require a journalist to show me all the quotations he planned to use in his interview with me, though in this case it didn't really matter, for the reporter was entirely sympathetic.

Sometimes I have chosen not to let reporters in the door. Many years ago, when I was director of an anti-poverty program in Little Rock, Arkansas, a writer of iconoclastic reputation from the *New Republic* called to say that he would like to come down to do an interview with me and write about the anti-poverty program in Little Rock. Even though I myself was a fairly regular contributor to the *New Republic* in those days, I told him that, if he arrived in town, I would do what I could to have him met and shot at the city limits, for I sensed that there was nothing he was likely to write that could do me or the job I was trying to do any good.

But why bother to control interviews? Why not dispense with them entirely? One is flattered by the request for interviews because interviews are taken to be an index of fame in the modern world. The more one is in demand for them, the more one can assume that there is interest in what one does. Writers seem especially vulnerable here, gratified at any evidence that such interest exists. The first writer to undergo extensive interviewing was, of course, Samuel Johnson; the interviewing was done by a freelance named James Boswell (also, by the standard of hanging around his subject, the first New Journalist). Goethe, who put up with the sycophantic Johann Peter Eckermann, was the next great writer to get the extended interview treatment. But Johnson and Goethe at least seemed to deserve such treatment; their views and opinions on their work and on nearly everything else were and remain—permanently pertinent. Not many other writers merit such close attention, yet, when offered any attention at all, few seem able to resist it.

Joseph Conrad was one writer who was able to resist it. Desmond MacCarthy has written of Conrad that "he seldom parted with his signature in any cause, and he respected his own craft so sincerely that he did not think it necessary for his manhood publicly to express strong views on the problems of London, traffic, diet, or foreign exchanges." Because of this, MacCarthy felt, Conrad "missed many opportunities of obtaining cheap advertisement" and instead concentrated on his fiction. Conrad was high-strung and spoke English with a strong accent (pronouncing *these* and *those* as "thesea" and "thosea" and *good* and *blood* as "gut" and "blut") and so may have been all the more nervous around journalists and about public performance. When Conrad traveled to the United States toward the end of his life and was met in New York by hordes of journalists and photographers, he wrote to his wife: "To be met by forty cameras held by forty men that look as if they came out of the slums is a nerve-shattering experience." Zdzislaw Najder, Conrad's best biographer, believes that "Conrad harmed his popularity by holding himself aloof from the literary and journalistic milieu, avoiding interviewers and all forms of advertising." He may well have hurt his popularity, but he did have one powerful thing going for him that caused him to rise above this: this was that he happened to be Joseph Conrad.

Conrad was in any case not a great devotee of journalism or publicity. In *The Secret Agent*, he refers to newspapers "written by fools to be read by imbeciles." In *Nostromo*, the character Nostromo finds all his prestige in being well spoken of; publicity, not by press, but by word of mouth means everything to this heroic figure. Drugged on publicity is the way Conrad thinks of this perhaps greatest among his fictional creations. What Conrad would have thought today while watching Geraldo or Oprah is amusing to contemplate. The thought of Conrad appearing on these shows to flog a new novel is too painful to consider.

The cynical among artists make use of publicity to serve their own ends. But the serious always know how frivolously ephemeral it all is. Maurice Ravel, writing to his friend Ida Godebska, remarks that a Belgian journalist has written to ask "where I spent my vacation, what my plans are for the winter, on which days I take my medicine, and other similar matters. It appears that this would keenly interest his readers. I'm replying that I took a cruise to the Indies, and this winter I'm going to hunt grouse in Scotland and begin training for the international car races." Philip Larkin, who

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cared about and guarded his reputation, nevertheless was careful not to promote it through hype.

On his famous postcard that began "Edmund Wilson regrets that it is impossible for him to . . . " Wilson listed, among other items, "Give interviews," "Supply personal information about himself," "Supply photographs of himself," and "Supply opinions on literary or other subjects." Late in life, Wilson took to publishing interviews with himself, one of which he titled "Every Man His Own Eckermann"; under such an arrangement one is at least certain to be asked intelligent questions. A story used to be told—I do not know if it is true—that Edmund Wilson turned down an opportunity to appear on the cover of *Time* magazine, and this was in the days when to appear on the cover of *Time* was an apotheosis of sorts, long before that once-powerful journal began to put dinosaurs and rock stars between its red borders.

Which brings me to the sad inflation in publicity. The low quality of people who are nowadays the subject of interviews, profiles, and publicity generally makes receiving any of these forms of public attention less than self-assuring. Proust said that in fashion and in medicine there must always be new names; he could add, were he alive today, that there must also always be new names in the arts, in the media, even among the wealthy. ("A man with a little money," says Lester Kane in Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt*, "hasn't any more privacy than a public monument.") But the publicity machine seems now too far ahead of the material out of which publicity, even by generous measure, ought to be made. Celebrity has thinned out beyond any possible persuasiveness. The *Paris Review* made a great splash when it began its once-famous series of interviews with writers (later published as books with the continuing title of *Writers at Work*), but, though the series continues, roughly twenty years ago they ran out of first-class writers to interview. The *New York Times Magazine*, after doing profiles of many undeserving writers, has now come down to doing similar profiles of jittery, trendy academics who are forever discovering new secrets in literature. Getting publicity these days is rather like receiving an honorary degree along with a Mafia man who donated money to build the new gymnasium, a psychologist who is pretty obviously a crank, and a ventriloquist who has given lots of his free time to educate the public about carbohydrates. Such honors become less than a matter of degree.

It might be easier to take publicity seriously if one felt that the people who dispense it, the journalists themselves, took it very seriously. I am far from convinced that they do. I recall five years ago receiving a call from a young woman in *Time*'s Midwest bureau who wanted to know what my thoughts were about the twentieth anniversary of the assassination of Robert Kennedy, which was coming up the following week. I allowed as I hadn't any thoughts about it, nor was I likely to have. "Oh, really," she said, and then, not losing a stitch, she added, "Do you know anyone else in the Middle West who is likely to have an interesting opinion on this subject?" I was not long ago called by a reporter from the London *Daily Telegraph*, a man with a hyphenated name and a lovely accent, for my opinion about Maya Angelou. Again, I had to allow that I hadn't one, which was connected with the fact that I had never read her. Might I put the reporter in touch with someone who had read Miss Angelou? the reporter queried. I said that I didn't know anyone else who had read her, either, adding that I believed that Miss Angelou, like many another contemporary American writer, is not so much read as taught, which, I averred, was not at all the same thing. Beautifully accented laughter came over the phone. I believe that remark was used in his story.

For a time, when I was an active member of the National Council of the National Endowment for the Arts, I received a fair number of such calls from the press and radio and television talk shows. This was during the period of the Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe troubles, and the NEA was hot copy. Their purpose in calling me, I believe, was the pursuit of a small but perhaps vicious quotation to enliven their own pieces. I chose not to accommodate. If a member of the press called when I wasn't home, leaving a message on my answering machine, I would generally not call back, which was highly effective, for by the next day a newspaper journalist has his story already written and is no longer interested in what you have to say. But when a journalist would catch me in, our conversation might go something like this:

"Mr. Aristides, John Simpson, *Boston Globe.*

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I'm calling for your opinion on the flap at the NEA."

"Sorry, Mr. Simpson, but I haven't got one, or at least not one that I haven't already offered at meetings of the Endowment. Besides, why should I help you write your story by offering you a pert quip or two?"

"But what about the public's right to know?"

"Ah, the public. Next time you are in touch with the public, Mr. Simpson, please don't fail to say hello for me."

Perhaps I should show more sympathy for journalists, these workers in the vineyard of public (but increasingly private) information. Their lives cannot be so easy. Flogging yet another of my books on a local radio station, I sat in the lobby of the studio, listening to the discussion then going on within, which was led by a psychiatrist with a strong German accent who was talking about eating disorders. Sitting there I felt a stab of pity for the host of the show, who had to talk, day after day, hour after hour, about all the social problems, social confusions, and various little madnesses making a claim for public attention. Do these talk-show chaps ever get confused, I wondered, and think they are talking to cross-dressing linebackers when in fact they are talking to abused sisters-in-law? Funny way to make a living. Funny way, come to that, to live.

In *A Child of the Century*, Ben Hecht reports that, in the let-'er-rip days of Chicago journalism in the first decade of this century, he had a beginning job on a newspaper as a photograph thief. Sometimes with burglary tools, sometimes with great ingenuity, always with impressive effrontery, the young Hecht would get into the homes of people who had recently been murdered or raped and steal a photograph—and, in one notable instance, a large oil painting—of the victim, which would be run in the next day's paper. Today we all bring in our own photographs, and, when asked, we provide a good deal more. It is one thing for me to know how Cher feels about younger men, or Mary Tyler Moore about her career after her emotional setbacks—this, after all, is part of the detritus of modern living—but why should I have to know that neither Gore Vidal nor Stephen Sondheim liked his mother, or that Susan Sontag dyes her hair, or that John Cheever was an alcoholic? Because all of them have chosen to tell interviewers these things. Some were asked, some volunteered the information. Every man and woman in our day is apparently his or her own Boswell; so many Boswells and, alas, no Samuel Johnsons whatsoever.

Were Karl Marx alive today, would he be the subject of a Dewar's Scotch profile (Last Book Read: Feuerbach's *Lehrbuch des gemeinen in Deutschland geltenden peinlichen.* Hobby: Class Struggle)? Would Napoleon be photographed in a turtleneck from The Gap? Would Marie Antoinette do a Rolex ad? One can imagine the talk-show possibilities: "Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the "Yesterday Show." Our guests tonight are: Jesus of Nazareth, songwriter Franz Schubert, playwright and comic Oscar Wilde, and Germany's own Adolf Hitler." One can readily imagine the questions that, say, a Barbara Walters would have for Hitler—Barbara who, the *New York Times Magazine* reports, goes not for the jugular but for the soft spots—or the roughing up a Mike Wallace would give to Jesus. Sad to think of all the splendid opportunities that these great names in history missed to let down their hair before journalists or on television.

I realize that writers who complain about being too famous are neither attractive nor believable. I hope an exception can be made in my case, if only because I am complaining without the actual fame. Not that I should at all mind being famous. I shouldn't in the least mind being prodigiously famous, just so long, you understand, as I remain not very well known.

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Human Morality and Animal Research

Confessions and Quandaries

HAROLD HERZOG

THE ETHICAL COMPLEXITIES OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH using animals first hit me during my second year of graduate school. I had been assigned to work in the laboratory of a chemical ecologist who was studying the skin chemistry of animals. Part of my job was to make molecular extracts from earthworms. Live worms were immersed in distilled water that had been heated to 180 degrees. After two minutes, their bodies were removed and the remaining liquid centrifuged and frozen for later analysis. I had performed this procedure several times and had come to view it as another lab chore, one that I did not particularly enjoy, but that caused me no particular moral discomfort. The worms died almost instantly when dropped into the near-boiling water. And, after all, they were just worms.

One afternoon I was asked to do something different. A scientist at another university was undertaking similar studies on desert animals and had arranged for some of his chemical analysis to be done in our laboratory. Shortly thereafter a large cardboard box arrived air express from Utah containing a veritable menagerie: several kinds of insects, a pair of pale scorpions, a lizard about six inches long, a small snake, and a lovely gray mouse. The task of converting the animals to vials of clear liquid was delegated to me.

I had dumped more than a few live lobsters into boiling pots with nothing more than the slightest moral twinge, and I did not expect to be bothered by the procedures. For some reason, it made sense to start with the smallest and most primitive of the animals. I began with the crickets, which, like the worms, died almost immediately when I

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dropped them into the hot distilled water. No problem. Next, the arthropods. In the several days that they had been in the lab, I had come to like the scorpions. They had more body mass than the insects and took a little longer to die when I dropped them in the beaker. I began to wonder about what I was doing.

The lizard was the first vertebrate. My stomach turned queasy, I began to sweat, and my hands shook when I dropped it into the near-boiling water. The lizard did not die quickly. It thrashed about in the hot liquid for 10 or 15 seconds before becoming still.

The snake was an elegant racer probably about a year old. I have always been fascinated by snakes. I collected them as a kid, and I still deal with them as one of the handful of comparative psychologists who study ophidian behavior. I drank a slow cup of coffee between the lizard and the snake, putting off the inevitable as long as I could. More shaky hands, a sweaty brow, a queasy stomach. More thrashing reptile reduced to an inert carcass and molecules suspended in solution.

Something was clearly wrong. I was not upset by a logical pang of conscience telling me that I was doing something immoral; it was years later that I was drawn to philosophical treatises by animal advocates. No, my response was purely visceral, a physical nausea akin to the body's involuntary shudder in response to the odor of putrification.

Finally, the mouse. I weighed the mouse, poured the appropriate amount of distilled water into the beaker, and lighted the Bunsen burner. As the water approached the 180 degree mark, it dawned on me that I simply could not "do" the mouse. I turned off the flame and, with trepidation and relief, walked into the office of the laboratory manager, thinking that my career as a graduate student was over. I said that I had made almost all of the extracts, but that I would not do the mouse. Much to his credit, the supervisor did not ask me to continue. He wound up boiling the mouse.

I have thought about my predicament that day many times over the years. I am now struck by the similarity between my task that afternoon and the plight of the subjects in Stanley Milgram's infamous obedience experiments. The hapless participants in his studies were instructed to administer a series of electrical shocks of increasing intensity to other subjects in an adjacent room. As all introductory psychology students know, the majority of people in the experiment administered levels of shock that they thought would be extremely painful, if not lethal. Like Milgram's subjects, I was confronted with a series of escalating choice points, based on phylogenetic status rather than shock intensity. The difference between the Milgram experi-

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ment and my situation was that in his study the shocks were a ruse; the subjects were really confederates of the experimenter. In my laboratory, the animals really died.

I was not the only member of my graduate school cohort who struggled with the moral consequences of their research. My friend Ron Neibor had a bigger problem than I did. He worked with cats. The focus of Neibor's dissertation was how the brain reorganizes itself after injury, a topic that was, unlike my explorations in chemical ecology, quite relevant to human health and well-being. Neibor did not choose cats because of any special curiosity about feline behavior. I suspect he would rather have worked with mice or rats. Cats, unfortunately, were the best model for the neural mechanisms that were his real interest. He employed a time-honored neuroscience technique; he surgically destroyed parts of the brains of his animals and observed the recovery of behavioral function over a period of months.

The problem was that Neibor liked his cats. His study lasted over a year, during which time he became quite attached to the two dozen animals in his control and experimental groups. Even on weekends and holidays he would drive to the lab, release his cats from their cages and play with them for hours. (This was long before federal regulations decreed that a few laboratory species be given the opportunity for daily exercise.) He thought of them as individuals. He talked about them, and he treated them more like pets than research animals.

His experimental protocol required that he confirm the location of the neurological lesions in animals in the experimental group through examination of their brain tissue. Part of this procedure, technically referred to as perfusion, is not pleasant under the best of circumstances. Each animal is injected with a lethal dose of anesthetic. Formalin is pumped through its veins via the heart, and the head is severed from the body. Heavy steel pliers are used to chip away the skull so that the hardened brain can be extracted and sliced into thin sections for microscopic analysis.

It took several weeks for Neibor to perfuse all of the cats in the experimental group. His personality changed. A naturally genuine and warm-hearted person, he became tense, withdrawn, shaky. Several graduate students working in his lab became concerned about his mental state, and they offered to perfuse his cats for him. Neibor refused, unwilling to dodge the moral consequences of his research. He did not talk very much during the weeks he was "sacrificing" his cats. Sometimes I noticed that his eyes were red, and he would look down as we passed in the halls.

These incidents provoked me to ask myself questions that I con-

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tinue to struggle with two decades later. Is there really a difference between researchers who kill mice in the name of science and the legions of good people who smash their spines with snap traps or slowly poison them with D-Con because they prefer not to share their houses with small rodents? Why was it easy for me to plunge the crickets into hot water, hard for me to do the same with the lizard, and impossible for me to do it to the mouse? Was it a matter of size, phylogenetic status, nervous system development, or simply attractiveness (the mouse was really cute)? Would Neibor's plight have been any different if his experimental subjects had been rats? What were the relative roles of logic and sentimentality underlying the moral confusion that nagged Neibor and me?

The moral problems of animal researchers can be traced to Charles Darwin, who, incidentally, had personal qualms about vivisection. The Cartesian argument that humans and animals are fundamentally different was persuasive in the seventeenth century. To Descartes, animals were biological machines. Thus early physiologists interested in the mechanics of blood circulation had no more ethical qualms about nailing a live dog to a board prior to dissection than we might about ripping memory chips from a balky computer. Evolution, on the other hand, implies phyletic continuity—not just in anatomy and physiology, but also in behavior and mental experience. And, in the halls at the annual meeting of the Animal Behavior Society, there is serious talk these days of deception, intention, and consciousness among chickens and monkeys . (One of the ironies of the animal-research debate is that animal-rights activists often invoke recent discoveries about the mental capacities of animals when arguing against the very research that has uncovered these abilities.)

There are ethical implications to the notion of phylogenetic continuity of mental experience. An obvious paradox arises—the more a species is like us in its physiology, the more useful a model it is for human biomedical problems. But, precisely *because* a species resembles us biologically, the more likely it is that it experiences similar mental states. In short, the more justified the use of a species on scientific grounds, the less justified is its use on moral grounds.

There is a related problem that I struggle with as an animal researcher. I call my version "E.T.'s dilemma," though the central issue has been described under other labels by ethicists. At the end of Steven Spielberg's well-known film, E.T.'s mother returns to Earth to retrieve her errant son, a lovable alien who has spent several days running around southern California with his new friend, Elliot. There is a sentimental parting scene. Elliot pleads with E.T. "Stay?" he asks. E.T. wistfully shakes his head and croaks to Elliot, "Come?" But, both

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know that each must return to his own world. E.T. and his mother take off back to Zork, and Elliot returns to life in the suburbs.

Suppose for a minute that the film ends differently. Again, Elliot declines the invitation to join E.T. The extraterrestrial, however, does not take no for an answer. He grabs the boy by the arm and drags him kicking and screaming into the ship. The doors close, and they zoom off to Zork. An AIDS-like epidemic has struck the home planet, and humans are the best animal model. The question is: Does E.T. have the right to abduct Elliot to be used as the subject of research aimed at developing a vaccine to protect the Zorkians? Clearly, they are intellectually and spiritually advanced over humans. (E.T. fashioned a phone out of junk to call home and made a dead flower blossom.) Research with animals is based on the premise that a "superior" species has the right to breed, kidnap, or kill members of "lesser" species for the advancement of knowledge. Though it violates my moral intuition, I see no way around the conclusion that E.T. has the right to abduct Elliot for his research. To do otherwise gives credence to the charge by animal-activist philosophers like Peter Singer and Tom Regan that our use of animals reflects self-serving speciesism, pure and simple.

The problem raised by E.T. is essentially that of ethical consistency. But, we do not have to turn to hypothetical space aliens to find inconsistencies associated with animal research. Take, for example, the moral status of mice in research facilities. Several years ago I spent a sabbatical year working in the Laboratory of Reptile Ethology at the University of Tennessee. The laboratory is located on the third floor of the Walters Life Sciences Building, a state-of-the-art facility that houses about fifteen thousand mice each year along with a smattering of other research animals. The mice are housed in antiseptic rooms in the basement and are cared for by a fully certified staff. As is standard practice at universities receiving federal funds, each project involving animal subjects is reviewed by the University of Tennessee Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, whose members are charged with weighing the potential benefits and costs of the experiments. All of the mice in the building belong to the same species, and they appear virtually identical. In terms of moral status, however, they belong to quite different categories.

The vast majority of the mice in Walters are good mice, the subjects of the hundreds of biomedical and behavioral experiments conducted by faculty, postdoctoral researchers, and graduate students working in the building. I suspect that the bulk of this research is directly or indirectly related to the solution of biomedical problems that afflict our species. Though they do not have any voice in the

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matter, these animals live and die for our benefit. They are now covered under the federal Animal Welfare Act and are entitled to a certain legal status not granted the mice in your home or even to your dog. (A judge in Oklahoma once threw out a charge against a cock fighter, ruling that roosters were not covered under the state animal-cruelty statutes because chickens were not animals. Lest we judge the judge too harshly, note that the Animal Welfare Act in essence also denies that mice and rats are animals, as they are excluded from coverage under the act. Recently a federal judge ruled that the exclusion of rodents under the law, while convenient for the research community, was arbitrary and illogical, although this matter is currently under appeal.)

There are also bad mice in Walters. The bad mice are pests, free-ranging creatures that can occasionally be glimpsed scurrying down the gleaming fluorescent corridors. These animals are a potential threat in an environment in which there is a premium on cleanliness and in which great care is taken to prevent cross contamination between rooms within the animal colony. These animals must be eliminated.

The staff of the animal facility has tried a number of different techniques to eradicate the bad mice. Household snap traps were found ineffective, and the staff was reluctant to use poison for fear of contaminating research animals. "Sticky traps" came to be the preferred method of rodent capture. Sticky traps are squares of cardboard coated with adhesive and imbued with a chemical mouse attractant, hence their alternate name, glue boards. The traps are placed in areas that pest mice frequent and are checked each morning. When a mouse steps on the trap, there is no escape; it only becomes more stuck as it struggles to free itself. Even though there is no poison embedded in the adhesive, over half of the mice found on the traps are dead, the result of struggle and stress. The rest are immediately killed by the staff.

Death by glue board is not humane, and I suspect that most animal-care committees would be reluctant to approve a study in which mice were glued to pieces of cardboard and left overnight. Thus there exists a peculiar situation in which treatment that is unacceptable for one category of animals is prescribed for animals of the same species that are of a different *moral* type. The irony of the situation is futher compounded by the source of the bad mice. The building does not have a problem with wild mice invading the premises. The pests are virtually always good mice that have escaped, an inevitability in a facility housing many thousands of animals. As a staff member once said to me, "Once an animal hits the floor, it is a pest."

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There is a third category of mice in the building, which is neither good nor bad. This category consists of mice that are food. The laboratory in which I worked specializes in the study of snake behavior. Most of the research animals were garter snakes, which thrive on a diet of worms and small fish. We did, however, keep some rat snakes and small boa constrictors, which need mammalian prey in order to thrive, and these mammals were mice ranging in size from newborns ("pinkies") to adults. Animal-care committees do not typically regulate the use of mice as snake food. After all, many reptiles will only eat live prey. Not providing them with an adequate diet of live rodents would ultimately result in their starvation, a clear violation of our ethical responsibilities.

In some experiments the role of a mouse as food or subject becomes clouded. Suppose Professor X wants to study the anti-predator strategies of mice. She plans to introduce live mice into a rattlesnake's cage and videotape the encounters between predator and prey. Now from the point of view of the mouse, there is little difference between being dropped into a rattler's cage for the purpose of being eaten or for the purpose of a study of its defensive responses. From a legal point of view, however, these are quite different situations. If Professor X presents the mouse to the snake simply to provide her research animal with its weekly meal, she does not need to secure prior permission from the animal-care committee. If her motivation is to study how the mouse defends itself, she had best begin filling out the request forms. In this case, the moral and legal status of the animal hinges not on species, brain size, or even the amount of suffering it might be expected to experience, but on its label—pest, food, or research subject.

Animal-rights activists will no doubt take satisfaction in knowing that I am not alone in squirming when these issues come up over beers late at night at scientific conferences. But animal activists have their own problems with moral coherence. I suspect that it was my own unease with these issues that compelled me to venture out of ethology, my academic home territory, and foray into ethnology. I became interested in the lives and worldviews of animal activists—people who would like to put scientists like me out of business, people who change their lives because of an idea. For three years, I attended animal-rights demonstrations and meetings, accumulated philosophical treatises and political pamphlets, and, most important, interviewed several dozen activists in their homes.

This essay is not the place to describe the methods and results of these studies. Suffice it to say that the animal activists I interviewed

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rarely fit the stereotypes in which they are sometimes cast by scientists, and I was impressed by their intelligence, sincerity, and dedication. One aspect of my findings, though, is germane here. For many activists the effort at consistency between belief and behavior affected almost all aspects of their lives—what they wore and ate, who their friends and lovers were, their thoughts during the day and dreams at night. This effort took many forms. Several spoke of feeling guilty when they drove their cars down the street, knowing that the tires were made from animal products and that bugs would inexorably be squashed on their windshields. One man told me of his love of softball. But, while he had found an adequate plastic glove, there was no getting around the fact that good softballs are covered with the skin of cattle and horses. In describing her attempts at consistency, one activist told me, "I don't use toxic chemicals on my dog to get rid of fleas. Instead I try to pick them off and release them outside. I know they do not feel pain or anything, but I feel it is important to be consistent. If I draw the line somewhere between fish and mollusks, it isn't going to make sense."

But just like animal researchers, animal activists can rarely escape the moral ambiguities inherent in even seemingly benevolent relations with other species. Take pets. I was introduced to the moral problems of pet keeping in a curious manner. A friend of mine who is an animal activist told me that she had received a complaint about me from a fellow activist. She was told that I was procuring kittens from our local animal shelter and feeding them to Sam, my son's pet boa constrictor. My first response was laughter at a groundless charge. Sam was just a baby snake, much too small to swallow even the littlest kitten. The incident did, however, provoke me to consider the ethics of feeding the animals we keep in our homes as pets.

The person who made the charge against me has four cats that wander at will in her house and in the surrounding woods. Domestic cats, no less than their larger cousins, are carnivores. Unlike humans and even dogs, they need meat to live healthy and happy lives. My accuser was a vegetarian for whom, in the language of the movement, "meat stinks." Prisoners of their biological constitution, her cats did not share her personal aversion to flesh. Thus, while diligently avoiding the meat counter for herself, she was, nonetheless, obligated to ponder the relative merits of the flesh of cow, turkey, horse, and fish when selecting meals for her pets. Even bags of dried cat food are advertised as containing fresh meat. She was driven by love of her cats to become an unwitting participant in the factory farm system that she was fighting.

Feline dietary habits are related to another moral quagmire—the

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predation problem. Cats like to kill things. They are inveterate hunters even if amply supplied with the tastiest of commercial fare. Two ecologists recently asked a group of English cat owners to record as best they could the number of mammals and birds that their pets killed over a period of months. They concluded that the five million domestic cats in Britain kill at least seventy million small animals each year, an average of fourteen prey animals per cat. There are about sixty-five million pet cats in the United States, and I do not have to spell out the dangers these animals represent to the birds, chipmunks, and lizards of America. It is even possible that more furry and feathered creatures die in the claws of cats owned by animal activists than in all of the research laboratories in the United States. The predation problem is particularly acute for cat owners who, with all good intentions, offer handouts to wild birds. With sunflower seeds and beef suet, they inadvertently lure their avian friends to within a pounce of their coldly efficient pets.

Other moral complexities confront animal advocates who choose to enjoy the comfort of "companion animals." Like it or not, most pets are subservient creatures, ultimately maintained for the amusement and comfort they afford their owners. This fact has not escaped more sophisticated activists who struggle with the moral implications of *owning* a member of another species. This issue was addressed by one of the activists I interviewed.

QUESTION: Do you have pets now?

ANSWER: No

QUESTION: For philosophical reasons?

ANSWER: Yes. Absolutely. I would love to have a pet. I grew up with the companionship of a dog and a cat and know that it is a real special thing. But I also think that it is wrong. Animals are not here for our happiness. Up until recently I had a parrot. I would leave him free to fly around my room. One day I just looked at him and said to myself, This is wrong. It wants to be free. I just took it out in the backyard and let it go—even though it was hand-fed and trained and I knew it wouldn't survive in the wild. Since then I have thought that letting him free was not the best thing for the bird—though I felt really good when it flew up and into a tree for the first time it had ever been able to fly really high. It was great, amazing. I was really happy to see that. I assume that he probably starved to death. It may have been more something that I was doing for myself than for the bird.

Enough said.

Animal activists use the phrase "the dreaded comparison" when pointing out the similarity between the rhetoric used by nineteenth-

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century advocates of slavery and twentieth-century defenders of animal research. But the animal-rights movement may have its own "dreaded comparison" in the issue of abortion. Several years ago I attended a public lecture given by Ingrid Newkirk, co-founder of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. Her formal presentation was followed by the obligatory question-and-answer period that was dominated by hostile challenges from animal husbandry students from a local agriculture college. Newkirk, as might be expected from one who spends considerable time in public forums, easily handled the questions and comments from the more skeptical members of the audience. Predictably, the issue of where one draws the proverbial line was thrown at the speaker ("Ms. Newkirk . . . Do you think flies and mosquitoes have rights?"). Her answer was direct: "We are concerned with *all innocent life.*"

I thought about her answer while returning home that night. At some point during the long drive it occurred to me that there might be a natural affinity between the two social movements in our society that proclaim support for the rights of the innocent. I began to query my interviewees about their attitudes toward abortion. Of the two dozen animal activists I interviewed, all but two supported "a woman's right to choose." Some of the activists were completely comfortable with their stance on abortion; in some cases they simply denied that there is any association between the two issues. ("I simply fail to see the connection between abortion and animal rights.") Others found their own pro-choice views problematic ("Oh, please don't ask me about abortion. I am so confused about it"). In only one case did a person tell me that he had shifted from "pro-choice" to "pro-life" as a result of his beliefs about the moral status of animals.

I should not have been surprised at this pattern. There have been a half-dozen or so sociological studies of the animal-rights movement. All have reported two salient demographic facts. Somewhere between two-thirds and three-fourths of animal activists are women, and, as a group, they tend to identify with the liberal side of the political spectrum. Liberal women rarely ally themselves with the right-to-life movement.

The divisiveness of the abortion issue among animal activists is illustrated by the following exchange between animal-rights activists, which recently arrived in my office through the miracle of electronic mail. It was posted on AR-TALK, an animal-rights computer bulletin board:

Message: I'd be very surprised if there isn't a positive correlation between "in favor of animal rights and protection" and "pro-choice attitudes" for the simple

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reason that intelligent, reasonable, and humane people will tend to support both.

Response 1: In other words, for intelligent, reasonable, and humane people, the unborn human child doesn't even count as much as an animal and thus deserves no protection?

Response 2: I would like to put in my own two-cents' worth. I agree with those who want to keep the abortion issue out of AR-TALK. I am not against open discussion of the issue of abortion, but it is *not* the same question as whether animals have "rights," whether humans are or are not to have pets, eat meat, experiment with animals, etc.

Though a pro-choice advocate myself, I find the supposition that a person and a pigeon share more in terms of moral status than a person and a six-month-old fetus troubling, if not bizarre. Some of the major philosophical thinkers behind the animal-protection movement such as Peter Singer, Tom Regan, and Steven Sapontzis do a reasonable job of arguing that there is a moral distinction between the interests of animals and those of a fetus. But the intellectual shucking and jiving of the philosophers notwithstanding, I would not be surprised to find that pro-choice animal activists sometimes feel the same nagging discomfort I experience late at night when contemplating the fate of Elliot in the scaly hands of E.T.

I once heard Andrew Rowan, the author of *Of Mice, Models, and Men*, say, "The only thing consistent about human-animal relations is paradox." Twentieth-century history offers a splendid example of "Rowan's Principle"—the Nazi animal-protection movement. Though not generally known, Adolf Hitler came close to being an animal-rights activist. A strict vegetarian, he objected to vivisection and once stated that hunting and horse racing were the "last remnants of a dead feudal world." His views on the treatment of animals were apparently shared by many of the Nazi ruling elite. Heinrich Himmler was "hysterical" in his opposition to hunting, and in one of history's great ironies, Hermann Göring wrote, "I will commit to concentration camps those who still think they can continue to treat animals as property."

This obscure historical footnote was brought to light in a remarkable paper published recently in the journal *Anthrozoös* by Arnold Arluke and Boria Sax, respectively an anthropologist and a linguist. In methodical and chilling fashion, Arluke and Sax chronicle the rise of the animal-protection movement that flourished in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s under the leadership of the Nazi party. Strict laws governing animal research and the slaughter of animals for food were enacted. An endangered-species act was passed by the German legisla-

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ture. The Nazis sponsored an early international conference on animal protection. The list goes on.

What are we to make of a culture in which government officials were more concerned with the treatment of lobsters in restaurants than genocide, in which vivisection was abhorred, yet torturous medical "experimentation" on humans was condoned? Surely, Nazi animal protectionism is paradoxical. Not so for Professors Arluke and Sax. They argue that when one understands the cultural and intellectual milieu of pre-war Germany, the contradictions of Nazi animal advocacy become more apparent than real. They write, "Our analysis raises what is to most contemporaries a troubling and unsavory contradiction, namely, that Establishment concern for animals in Nazi Germany was combined with disregard for human life. This paradox vanishes, however, if we see that the treatment of animals under the Third Reich really tells us about the treatment of humans and the cultural rules and the problems of human society."

While I admire the elegance of their analysis, I beg to differ. We can indeed follow the twisted logic that enabled the Nazis to construct a moral taxonomy in which some animals were endowed with higher moral status than some people. But does this really cause the paradox of a humane Hitler to vanish? Not for me. I suggest that Nazi animal protectionism is the ultimate paradox, one that we *should not* explain away for it may be the central metaphor haunting all of our relations with other species. Is a vegetarian Hitler any more paradoxical than the pain physiologist who administers electrical shocks to devocalized beagles in the quest for a better analgesia during the day but who is met at the door by his faithful cocker spaniel when he returns home from his laboratory? Or the animal-rights/vegetarian cat owner?

Neither animal researchers nor animal activists inhabit a tidy moral universe. The different worldviews of animal-rights activists and scientists often make communication between scientists and activists about as productive as discussions between evolutionary biologists and creationists. In words that apply all too aptly to the animal-research issue, Mary Midgely described the difficulty of discussion between moral vegetarians and meat-eaters: "The symbolism of meat-eating is never neutral. To himself, the meat-eater seems to be eating life. To the vegetarian, he seems to be eating death. There is a kind of gestalt-shift between the two positions which makes it hard to change and hard to raise questions on the matter at all without becoming embattled."

Animal-rights supporters are often portrayed by their opponents among scientists as hyper-emotional and anti-intellectual Luddites

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who value puppies and baby seals over healthy human children. Research with animals, says the scientist, is rarely more painful than the pervasive cruelty of nature. Besides, it is our only avenue for alleviating the disease and pestilence that afflicts our own and other species.

Not so, claims the activist. Scientists are cold and unfeeling, so blinded by years of socialization in laboratories and classrooms that they cannot see the suffering before their eyes or hear the cries of their innocent victims. For researchers, animals are Cartesian automata, objects to be used in the unending quest for fame, federal funds, and trivial knowledge. Biomedical research does not relieve suffering. It causes it. Further, animal research doesn't work—you cannot generalize from mice to men. And the scientific use of nonconsenting individuals, be it animals or humans, is an ill-gotten gain. Whether it works or not is irrelevant.

In reality, both are right—and wrong. True, most biomedical scientists I know aspire to tenure, full professorships, editorial boards, and a share of federal research funds. But they are drawn to animals from curiosity (not a trivial motive for scientists), a desire to make human life better, or a genuine reverence for the natural world.

True, too, many animal activists tend to empathize viscerally with the suffering that they see as the result of situations unfairly perpetrated on the innocent. It is also true that experiments on kittens and dogs are more likely to bring out the protesters than research on snakes. But in my view it is a mistake to dismiss the moral sensibilities of animal activists as "mere emotionalism." The philosophical underpinnings of the movement are rooted in cold, rigorous logic and are not as easy to refute as many scientists like to think. Contrary to stereotype, most activists do not scarf down cheeseburgers at McDonalds between demonstrations or wear leather shoes. Indeed, they labor under a particularly heavy personal moral burden.

Disagreements about the treatment of animals in research ultimately stem from our tendency to think simply about complex problems. Decisions about the use of other species are extraordinarily intricate, rooted more in the peculiarities of human psychology than in pure reason. Inevitably, the result is paradox and inconsistency. It is a complicated world for all but the true believers.

When asked where I stand on the animal-research issue, I have taken to responding with Strachan Donnelley's phrase, "the troubled middle." Granted, the troubled middle is not a comfortable place to be. But, for most of us, neither are the alternatives.

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Alcibiades

by Timandra, the courtesan

EUGENE SCHLANGER

I buried Alcibiades after
He was pierced by arrows and javelins.
So much for the friendship of Socrates.
Athens is in ruins, undone by rivals,
Without and within, because she fostered
Rivalries. Her hope, this impudent man,
Twice charged by detractors, and twice exiled,
Cannot restore her Long Walls or triremes.
How fitting, after all those victories—
Cyzicus, Byzantium, and the festal
Procession to Eleusis restored to
The priests—that he perishes in Persian
Lands, by Persian hands, at Sparta's command.
Agis, the Spartan king, rejected the boy
Fathered by Alcibiades in his stead;
As the Spartan queen whispered to her maidens:
Alcibiades, Alcibiades!
Reveler, victorious in war,
Beyond law and mordant democracy,
A breeder of horses, this Greek whom
Only women might succor. Now the Gods:
Reprimanding those too easily roused
By portents of ill fortune; unable
To bear the deprivation, disgrace, despair
Attendant of temporal success.
The Elders capitulate. Inconstant.

✪ EUGENE SCHLANGER practices law on Wall Street.

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Iatrogenic Government

Social Policy and Drug Research

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN

WRITING IN THE *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1983, Armand M. Nicholi of the department of psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Harvard Medical School commented:

> When future historians study American culture, they may be most perplexed by the explosive increase in the nonmedical use of drugs that occurred during the seventh and eighth decades of this century. This widespread increase in the illicit use of psychoactive drugs began in the early 1960s, primarily in colleges and universities, during an era of unprecedented campus disorder and social upheaval. For the next 10 years studies were focused on patterns of drug use among college students—the late-adolescent and young-adult age groups. Perhaps because of the strong influence youth exerts in establishing the tone of our culture with respect to music, dress, and lifestyle, the nonmedical use of drugs spread rapidly to other age groups, and during the 1970s it reached epidemic proportions.

When these future historians set to work, one matter need not perplex them. If they should ask—and let us hope they do—did anyone in the medical profession, observing the onset of this epidemic, set out in a scientific manner to try to understand what was happening and to develop an appropriate medical response, the answer will be that there was one such person, Norman Zinberg, professor of psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School. He was, in the most profound sense, a healer, a life-enhancing man.

Although Zinberg's major work, *Drug, Set, and Setting,* was not published until 1984, his papers and lectures were well and widely known by the mid-1960s. At that time I was director of the Joint

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Center for Urban Studies of M.I.T. and Harvard. We were neighbors and became friends, and I, in a legitimate sense, became his pupil. In 1969, I went to Washington as an adviser on urban affairs to President Nixon. The urban crisis, as it was known at that time, was very much a drug crisis, chiefly entailing heroin. Early on it fell to me to try to fashion a response by the federal government. This was perhaps the first time the federal government had attempted a deliberate relationship between social policy and drug research. This is also the subject of the final chapter in Norman Zinberg's *Drug, Set, and Setting.*

My first foray into the field came in August 1969, after the president had sent to Congress a considerable legislative program that addressed urban matters. In this program, the welfare system was to be replaced by a guaranteed income, known as the Family Assistance Plan. The federal government would share its revenue with state and city governments. Now was the time for drugs. At that time most of the heroin used here was coming in from Marseilles, where it was refined from Turkish opium. I set out for those countries to tell their officials and our own embassies (which seem never to have heard of the subject) that the United States could not accept "the French connection."

After a scattering of heroin-related deaths among French youths, *Le Monde* published an article ascribing drug addiction to broken homes and the National Assembly had a day-long debate on the subject. The French took the matter far more seriously than we had ever done, and before long Marseilles was clean, as the argot has it. Having reached tentative agreements, I found myself in a helicopter flying up to Camp David to report on this seeming success. The only other passenger was George P. Shultz, who was busy with official-looking papers. Even so, I related our triumph. He looked up. "Good," said he, and returned to his tables and charts. "No, really," said I, "this is a *big* event." My cabinet colleague looked up, restated his perfunctory "Good," and once more returned to his paperwork. Crestfallen, I pondered, then said, "I suppose you think that so long as there is a demand for drugs, there will continue to be a supply." George Schultz, sometime professor of economics at the University of Chicago, looked up with an air of genuine interest. "You know," he said, "there's hope for you yet!"

As indeed there was: both for me individually and for the federal government as it once again engaged itself with the matter of drugs. Early in December 1969, a governors' conference was convened to address the issue. At a luncheon at the Department of State I was the principal speaker. I do not suggest that my views were held uniformly

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throughout the administration, but there I was, Counselor to the President, telling the governors what *I* thought—a point of view that they had reason to believe was close to what others like me thought. The truth in either event is that we were mostly asserting what we did not know and would need to learn.

I called my paper "The Whiskey Culture and the Drug Culture." I had a simple theme.

> Let me offer one general idea. Drug use—and abuse—represents simply one more instance of the impact of technology on society. This is the central experience of modern society. At one or two removes, most of the ills we suffer are the consequences of technology. That is to say, the *bad* results that accompany the *good* ones—good results which led to the adoption of the technology in the first place. A commonplace observation, but truly an important one, and one which will I think be recognized by Governors who struggle daily with waters polluted by technology, underprivileged populations displaced by technology, drivers and pedestrians maimed by technology, cities choked with technology, and air fouled by it. Not to mention urban populations near to terrorized by crime brought about by the need to obtain money to purchase certain drugs which are yet another product of technology. From nuclear weapons to cyclamates, this is what is so unsettling about modern life. The effort to master and somehow transcend technology is central to the concerns of the great philosophical historians and sociologists of the age, men such as Jacques Ellul, Lewis Mumford, David Riesman, Michael Young. But for the moment one of the tasks of government is to keep technology from rending the fabric of society. That is what this conference is about, the specifics of which I would like now to consider.

I discussed in some detail the extraordinary destructiveness of distilled alcohol when it first became available in the eighteenth century as a combined result of the renaissance invention of distillation and the later agricultural revolution that produced an abundance of grain. The species had no experience with an intoxicant of this power. In his fine study, *Town Planning in London: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Donald J. Olsen identified the onset of distilled spirits as a form of social pathology: "Cheap gin helped to keep the population of London stable from 1700 to 1750."

In truth, the numbers are astonishing. M. C. Bauer estimated the population in 1700 to have been 674,000 and fifty years later to be no more than 676,000. By contrast the population of London tripled in the first half of the *following* century, going from 864,845 in the census of 1801 to 2,363,236 in 1851. Ought we not to think that a form of social learning was taking place—at a time of robust laissez-faire government—and the population was coming to terms with this new product of technology.

W. J. Rorabaugh's *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition*

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would not appear for another decade, but enough of the American experience was available to provide some useful generalizations. The first law enacted by the first Congress established the oath of office required by Article VI of the Constitution. To wit: "I, A.B., do solemnly swear or affirm (as the case may be) that I will support the Constitution of the United States." The second law imposed a ten-cents-per-gallon tariff on Jamaican rum—to encourage consumption of American whiskey. This was a general tariff bill, but it is noteworthy that six of the first seven items concern drink.

> On all distilled spirits of Jamaica proof, imported from any kingdom or country whatsoever, per gallon, ten cents.
> On all other distilled spirits, per gallon, eight cents.
> On molasses, per gallon, two and a half cents.
> On Madeira wine, per gallon, eighteen cents.
> On all other wines, per gallon, ten cents.
> On every gallon of beer, ale or porter in casks, five cents.
> On all cider, beer, ale or porter in bottles, per dozen, twenty cents.

Distilled spirits in early America appeared as a font of national unity, easy money, manly strength, and all-round good cheer. It was at first irresistible. It felt good and was thought to be good for you. The more the better. It became routine to drink whiskey at breakfast and to go on drinking all day. (Laborers digging the Erie Canal were allotted a quart of Monongahela whiskey a day, issued in eight four-ounce portions commencing at six o'clock in the morning.) Only slowly did it sink in that such a regimen was ruinous to health and a risk to society. When it did, society responded.

Apart only from the movement to abolish slavery, the most popular and influential social movement of nineteenth-century America concerned the effort to limit or indeed prohibit the use of alcohol. The former brought about three amendments to the Constitution; the latter, two. In *Thinking About Crime* (1983), James Q. Wilson estimates that by the end of the nineteenth century the temperance movement had reduced per capita alcohol consumption by two-thirds. Alcohol abuse continues to be a major health problem—and a murderous one in combination with that other technological wonder, the automobile. But at least the dangers of alcohol are far better understood than in the past.

The use of what might be termed high-proof drugs appears roughly a century later than the use of high-proof alcoholic drink. Just as beer and wine are naturally fermented products of grain and grapes, narcotics and stimulants appear in nature as attributes of the

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poppy or coca plant. The crucial technological event here was the development of organic chemistry in German universities in the middle of the nineteenth century.

First, morphine was produced from opium. In combination with the hypodermic needle, morphine was widely used in Civil War medicine, giving rise to a form of addiction that was popularly called Soldier's disease. (The medical use of morphine in childbirth evidently led to similar forms of addiction.) A generation later, heroin, a "distillation" of morphine, was developed by the Bayer Pharmaceutical firm in Germany. (Employees on whom it was tested found that it made them feel *heroisch*—hence, its trade name.) It appears to have been thought useful as a cure for morphine addiction.

In like manner, cocaine, the active ingredient of the coca leaf, was isolated before 1880. Its early use was medical, again in association with the hypodermic needle. Freud used it to treat a friend suffering from morphine addiction. As he increased the doses, he induced an episode of cocaine psychosis and, as reported by Oakley Stern Ray in *Drugs, Society, and Human Behavior* (1978), "thereafter was bitterly against drugs." On the other hand, in 1885, the Parke-Davis Pharmaceutical Company asserted that cocaine "can supply the place of food, make the coward brave, the silent eloquent" and declared it a "wonder drug."

Along with alcohol, these substances came under federal prohibition early in this century. Alcohol prohibition was a convulsive event that, among other things, led to the creation of a criminal underworld of exceptional influence and durability. There was always a certain amount of drug trafficking within this underworld, and this continued at modest levels until the epidemic outbreak of heroin use in the 1960s. It thereupon provided the model on which the large-scale import and distribution of drugs commenced in the 1960s.

Rereading my little-noticed and long-forgotten paper is rewarding—to me, at any rate—in the way it reveals the iron incompatibilities that beset anyone who tries, however tentatively, to derive drug policy from drug research, and for that matter social science. Here I would invoke the wonderfully allusive remark of Rudolph Virchow, the eminent nineteenth-century pathologist. "Medicine," he said, "is a social science, and politics is nothing but medicine on a grand scale." As I developed first this argument, then that analogy, I kept running up against the fact that our society had made a political choice between two almost equally undesirable outcomes. As Mark A. R. Kleiman spells out in his fine new study, *Against Excess: Drug Policy for Results,* in dealing with drugs, we are required to choose between a crime problem and a public health problem. In choosing to prohibit

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drugs, we choose to have a more or less localized—but ultimately devastating—crime problem rather than a general health problem. Kleiman writes:

> The case for heroin prohibition is simply that a number, probably a large number, of persons who now lead reasonably satisfying, dignified, and useful lives would, if heroin were legal, find themselves leading, and regretting, lives with a narrowed range of satisfactions, impaired dignity and self-command, and reduced usefulness to their families, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and fellow citizens. To prevent this we pay a price in a form of increased misery for those who become heavy heroin users despite prohibition, and increased external costs: the spread of disease, user crime, black-market crime, neighborhood disruption from open dealing, and the expenditure of law enforcement resources that could instead be used to suppress predatory crime.

Then, as now, I opposed legalization, or decriminalization of drugs. I took the technological ascent seriously. In his *Letters from an American Farmer* published in 1782, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur notes his surprise at a "singular custom" among the good, and presumedly Puritan ladies of Nantucket: "They have adopted these many years, the Asiatic custom of taking a dose of opium every morning. . . . This is much more prevalent among the women than the men."

But opium is one thing; heroin another. My 1969 paper concluded:

> There are those who will and do propose a social policy of complete and free availability of almost all chemical substances that are or can be ingested in one form or another. In its most popular form today, this takes the form of advocating the free use of cannabis, and somewhat less frequently, the free, or mildly regulated use of heroin. I believe this to be a very mistaken position. It is a form of hiding behind the principle of individual freedom to avoid the reality of individual danger and individual harm. It is almost a form of indifference to pain: and I say that in full knowledge of the generosity of spirit and the effort to be understanding that often motivates such proposals.
>
> Our object must be higher. We must learn to use fewer drugs, not more.
>
> The question of course is how?

That was pretty clear twenty-three years ago when we were just entering our current federal preoccupation with illicit drugs—or rather, with drugs the federal government has declared illicit. I had put it to the governors:

> We have had drug prohibition for fifty-five years now. And here we are at this conference. Not exactly a record of success. What are we to learn? The first thing, obviously, is that this is not an easy problem. Men as good as us or better have struggled, and by all outward indices, they have failed.

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There was not going to be any cheap way out of this. Technology has unleashed an enormous social agent that threatens us in the most serious way. This problem now involves "the structure of authority and governmental legitimacy in America." Are the laws obeyed? Does the state maintain a monopoly on violence? If not, what kind of state have we?

This is where Norman Zinberg entered what, at least, were my calculations. Here is one last passage from the State Department address.

> Dr. Norman Zinberg has, it seems to me, most helpfully described the drug phenomenon in terms of a triangle of "Drug, Set, and Setting." That is to say we need to know so much more about the interaction of a particular chemical, a particular individual, and the social (or anti-social) context in which the two come together. This is very like the epidemiological triad, and deserves the most careful attention and serious research. Until very recently most drug users have been treated in terms of medical or criminal categories. Drug users were treated as deviants. Benignly so in the case of the Civil War opium addicts swilling away at patent medicines to cure what was known as "Soldier's illness," or punitively so as in the case of the heroin addict of the slum, supporting his habit by thievery or worse, and in agonizing numbers ending his life by what society prefers to diagnose as an "overdose" of whatever it is that ailed him.

A near quarter century has passed. Nothing much has happened. There has been precious little research, with as yet precious little by way of result on that epidemiological triad. Thanks to Vincent Dole and Marie Nyswander we have methadone treatment, but that was already in place when the federal government entered its current war on drugs.

At the risk of propounding what I cannot prove, let me suggest that in considerable measure this is the result of a disinclination within the medical profession to engage itself with drug research. In the preface to *Drug, Set, and Setting*, Zinberg notes that the train of thought that led him to his subject began in 1962 in Beth Israel Hospital, where, making rounds with non-psychiatric physicians, he "began to puzzle over the extreme reluctance these sensible physicians felt about prescribing doses of opiates to relieve pain." Concern about iatrogenic addiction established the social setting that Zinberg would go on to elaborate. He noted "the strength of Puritan moralism in American culture which frowns on the pleasure and recreation provided by intoxicants." Whatever the causes, and they are surely multiple, it is clear to this observer that the medical profession finds drug research aversive behavior.

As an example of our most recent affliction, take "crack" cocaine. This is typical of an ascent on the technological ladder: beer to whis-

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key; opium to morphine to heroin; coca to cocaine and now to this most potent possible form of "free-base" cocaine. Crack differs only in being the result of folk science rather than the work of bearded professor-doctors in German laboratories. (Although, come to think of it, Highland single malt was probably a similar, if more welcome, discovery.) Crack first appeared in the Bahamas. By 1985, a Bahamian physician warned that an epidemic was about to strike his offshore islands. This item appeared in the *Atlanta Journal* of December 31, 1985:

> NASSAU, BAHAMAS — A highly addictive practice of smoking cocaine "rocks" has swept this chain of islands off the coast of Florida.
>
> In a country of 230,000 people, the number of cocaine users treated at mental health clinics has zoomed from zero in 1982 to 209 in 1984, according to Dr. David Allen, a Harvard-trained psychiatrist who heads the National Drug Council.
>
> "What we have [Dr. Allen said] is the world's first free-basing epidemic [which] could be preceding an epidemic in the industrialized states. Anywhere there is readily available high-quality cocaine, there is this potential."

Here was a psychiatrically trained epidemiologist telling us that an epidemic was coming our way. But such is the low status of drug research that, so far as I have been able to learn, apart from a single sentence of a 1982 issue of the Centers for Disease Control publication, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, there was no official response anywhere in the vast organizational network that was by now carrying out the war on drugs. The first medical report appeared in the British journal the *Lancet* in a 1986 article by Dr. Allen and others entitled "Epidemic Free-Base Cocaine Abuse: Case Study from the Bahamas."

This was the situation when Congress returned to the subject of drugs in 1988. Society had had two bad breaks during that decade: the sudden onset of AIDS and the appearance of crack in settings of lethal proximity. The public demanded action, or at least the appearance of action, or so at least loud political voices declared. On May 17, 1988, Senate Majority Leader Robert S. Byrd established a working group on substance abuse, to be co-chaired by Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia and me. Interdiction and crackdown were then all the rage. (A law providing the death penalty for "kingpins" reached the president's desk months before ours did. It was promptly signed.) My role on the working group was to assert—quietly, so as not to disturb the public peace—that, other than to raise the price of drugs somewhat, interdiction was not going to have the slightest effect on supply. This was the maxim George Shultz taught me. Accordingly, any com-

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prehensive legislation should place at least equal emphasis on demand. The lesson Norman Zinberg taught me, the idea that controlled use was possible, even common, led directly to the proposition that treatment could be developed that could move drug users across the line toward abstinence, or as near to abstinence as possible.

I consulted Zinberg. I asked him to coach me on how to make this case. In the end it worked. After an unusually compressed six months of congressional debate, ending with a 65–29 vote in the Senate, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 became law on November 18 of that year. Section 2012 sets out the purposes of the law. These include:

> To increase to the greatest extent possible the availability and quality of treatment services so that treatment on request may be provided to all individuals desiring to rid themselves of their substance abuse problem.

The legislation established an Office of National Drug Control Policy in the executive office of the President. It was headed by the so-called czar and included a deputy director for supply and a deputy director for demand.

And so the attempt to get drug problems under control began again. And once more it failed to thrive. Czars resigned, which czars are not supposed to do. Deputies departed. Silence fell. Even so, knowledge edged on. Richard Millstein of the National Institute on Drug Abuse notes that scientists have for some time known that by manipulating the opiate molecule it is possible to develop compounds that block or reverse the effects of drugs such as morphine and heroin. For example, naloxone was approved for use in 1971 and is now part of the Emergency Medical Service protocol. A longer-acting narcotic antagonist, naltrexone, was approved for use in 1984. And a time-released "depot" dosage has been found to block the effects of opiate challenges, as doctors say, for up to seven weeks in rhesus monkeys. However, as an internal paper of the National Institute states, while there is an agonist treatment (methadone) and an antagonist treatment (naltrexone) for opiates, no approved medication for the treatment of addiction to cocaine (including the smokable form of cocaine known as crack) currently exists. And crack cocaine is where the problem is centered.

Having said that, a political scientist is honor bound to add that the power of government *or* science to influence behavior is limited. People do or do not get on with their lives. Most do. Here, as an example, is an excerpt from *Tales Out of School*, the autobiography of Joseph A. Fernandez, who until recently was the New York City School Chancellor; this excerpt describes his years as a drug-dependent teenager.

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The beginning of my own fateful turnabout came in one night of horror on 135th Street when I was still enrolled at Commerce High. Jimmy Conn (not his name) had become my closest friend during that time, partly because of the experimenting we were doing with heroin. Jimmy was a Scotch-Irish kid from a poor family, with no father at home. Actually, he lived outside the neighborhood, up in the 130's, but we were very close, to the point of swapping clothes to wear.

This particular night we were at somebody's house and got tied into some really potent heroin. I got sick almost immediately, a scary new kind of sickness. I remember saying to Jimmy, "Something's wrong. We gotta get outta here."

By the time we got downstairs to the street, we were both reeling. I can barely remember my friends walking us up and down the sidewalk, trying to keep us from fading out. They probably saved our lives. I was half in and half out for hours. Jimmy came to first. When I finally did, I was scared enough to realize it was time to make a change.

I dropped out of Commerce the following week and enrolled at Textile High, down in Hell's Kitchen, where I didn't know anybody. I could tell immediately it wasn't going to work. I was there only a week and dropped out again.

Norman Zinberg would have thought young Fernandez a pretty hard case. But he would not have been the least surprised that the kid got hold of himself, joined the air force, married a strong woman, got an education, and went on to do serious work. His *setting* changed.

As for our 1988 legislation, it had a brief half-life. William Bennett, the forceful first director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, was followed by a political appointee with no apparent views on the subject. Dr. Herbert D. Kleber left after two years, and his position has not been filled. Nor has support for treatment been as forthcoming as the legislation indicated it ought to be. Kleber wrote:

> Funding for treatment of substance abuse has been a bipartisan failure. Our Republican President has requested substantially less money than is needed; and the Democratic Congress gave him only one-third of what he asked for. The situation in research is not much better, in spite of the desperate need to develop medications to treat cocaine abuse. The House gave the President $17 million less for research at NIDA [National Institute on Drug Abuse] than he had requested. In fact, the overall increase for NIDA was slightly over 1 percent, one of the lowest if not the lowest of the NIH [National Institutes of Health] institutes. Both government leaders and the general public need to be made aware of the potential promise that can occur by adequately funding treatment and research, and of the many harms to society that will occur if it does not happen.

The recent presidential campaign was only marginally encouraging. The Republican platform was straight out. Ignoring treatment altogether, the GOP chose to fry the kingpins, as the battle cry goes.

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We oppose legalizing or decriminalizing drugs. That is a morally abhorrent idea, the last vestige of an ill-conceived philosophy that counseled the legitimacy of permissiveness. Today, a similarly dysfunctional morality explains away drug-dealing as an escape, and drive-by shootings as an act of political violence. There is no excuse for the wanton destruction of human life. We therefore support the stiffest penalties, including the death penalty, for major drug traffickers.

The Democratic position called for "treatment on demand," which was mildly disappointing since no one seemed to remember that we have already legislated "treatment on request." ("Request" was my term; I thought "demand" sounded too imperious.) The platform read:

Drug treatment on demand: Thousands of addicts have volunteered to take themselves off the streets, only to hear the government tell them that they have to wait six months. In a Clinton Administration, federal assistance will help communities dramatically increase their ability to offer drug treatment to everyone who needs help.

The Democrats won, and so we shall see. My hope is that it will be possible for the generation now coming into its own in the normal rhythm of generational change to be able to recall that drug use first became conspicuous, in *this* cycle, among educated and relatively affluent young persons on college campuses. It is so no longer. Drug use—and in notably destructive forms—is now concentrated in the weakest and least affluent segments of our population. It is inescapably associated with race. Here are some devastating numbers. In 1960 there were 189,733 persons in state prisons; 65 percent were white, 34 percent black. Thirty years go by and, in 1989, there are 610,106 persons in prison, but now 50 percent are black. (In the meantime the racial composition of federal prisons, where there are fewer drug offenders, has changed not at all: in 1960, 71 percent white, 25 percent black; in 1989, 73 percent white, 26 percent black.)

It is essential that we understand that by choosing prohibition we are choosing to have an intense crime problem concentrated among minorities. It is no different from Prohibition in the 1920s. Al Capone and Legs Diamond were recognizable urban slum types of that era. Much of the crime in our day is of the same order, down to formal executions. The St. Valentine's Day Massacre of 1929 has entered American folk memory. It was all but re-enacted in New York City in 1993. In the Morrisania section of the Bronx, six persons were made to lie down on a tenement floor. Five were shot in the back of the head. A young woman who turned her head was shot in the eye. But that was only six dead, not enough to meet the qualification, as it were, of the look-alike competition. However, the following day, a

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seventh person, the wife of one of the suspected murderers, was herself murdered in the Bronx County Courthouse.

Clearly federal drug policy is responsible for a degree of social regression for which there does not appear to be any equivalent in our history. Fueled by drug arrests, prison populations hit a record of 883,593 at the end of 1992. Indeed, the number of inmates imprisoned for drug offenses now exceeds those in prison for property crimes. And, as the youth are said to say, we just don't get it. What we don't get is the admittedly complex proposition that the recurrent "failure" of our avowed drug policy represents the success of a strategy designed to avoid a different failure. Those most affected do not at present have a political vocabulary that can "demystify" this conundrum. And, to say once more, the medical profession is mostly mute.

One more once more. We must recognize that our choice of policy—legalization or prohibition—involves a choice of outcomes. An enormous public health problem on the one hand, an enormous crime problem on the other. The latter clearly requires more by way of public policy than the death penalty for people who kill each other in any event. Surely, drug policy should be a central concern for those who deal with issues involving race in our society. Interdiction and "drug busts" are probably necessary symbolic acts, but nothing more. Only the development of a blocking or neutralizing agent would have any real effect, given the setting in which our drug problem now occurs.

That setting—an independent variable, as Norman Zinberg insisted—is the near collapse of family structure in our central cities. Without this, drug abuse would present a real but, even so, manageable problem of behavior by marginal individuals. With it the problem is no longer manageable. To use an epidemiological analogy, we have a famine-weakened population attacked by a fierce new virus.

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Translating

DIANA DER-HOVANESSIAN

I

I was born bilingual but . . .

the Armenian language
became the music of my childhood
the honeyed taste
of everything that was home.
It is my lost treasure,
halved and bartered;
the dream that comes to haunt
my English-language dream.
It is the echo of the ages,
the shadow of old giants,
which we grasp at, a gift
we are letting drift away.

II

Old Words

Sometimes it takes five words
of buoyant, tensile English
to explain one ancient leathery word.

Old words lie weighted, glittering
for centuries in the sun
like brittle stones.

And Armenian words have worn thin
like old coins, changed, exchanged,

gaining a soft patina unmatched
except by old monasteries in the rain.

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Their meanings have grown ironic
with a subtle subliminal drone.
Take the word for justice
with its satiric overtones.

III

Custom

Words are not lifeless.
They live in houses;
they grow and they are fed.
In Armenian *Dada* does not mean
father but *grandmother*,
the second hovering figure
over baby's head.

IV

Words Are Made of Breath,

larynx, lip, and tongue,
print and paper but the silent signs
of what there is to be sung.

The Arabs say every new language
gives the learner an added soul.
The Irish say Celtic silence
cannot be recast or retold.

Italians laugh saying music
is the challenge, moving music is the art.
The Armenians say their language
is translated only by the heart.

✪ DIANA DER-HOVANESSIAN's most recent collection of poetry is *Songs of Bread, Songs of Salt.* "Translating" is the twelfth winner of the Mary Elinore Smith Poetry Prize. This prize is given in memory of Miss Smith by her family and friends. Mary Elinore Smith, who died in 1981, was an editor of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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The World's Worst Biography

DONALD GREENE

In September 1831, young Tom Macaulay, the star journalist of the *Edinburgh Review*, published his most memorable contribution, a critique of John Wilson Croker's edition of James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*. For decades it was reprinted throughout the English-speaking world, often in schoolbook form along with his article on Johnson in the eighth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1856. The latter remained in the *Encyclopaedia*—sometimes with "modifications," as one of its later editors put it, "in those places in which his invincible love of the picturesque has drawn him demonstrably away from the dull line of veracity"—until the 1960s, when one of the authors of its replacement, a veteran Johnson scholar, remarked, "Thank God, at last we've got rid of Macaulay!" Alas, we haven't; nor of Boswell either.

Macaulay's 1831 review is a landmark in the history of irresponsible journalism. It begins with a furious assault on the editor—Croker was a staunch Tory wheelhorse; it was the time of bitter partisan struggle over the Reform Bill, and Macaulay was just beginning his brilliant career as a Whig politician. "The edition," we are told, "is ill compiled, ill arranged, ill written, and ill printed." There follows page after page of supposed errors in Croker's notes (though sometimes it is Macaulay who is in error: he thinks Johnson first met the Thrales in 1764, and calls Croker's dating of the meeting in 1765 a "monstrous blunder"; in fact, it took place on January 9, 1765). He chastises Croker for including additional information about Johnson from Mrs. Thrale, Hawkins, and others, though that is exactly what users of the standard modern edition of the *Life* are grateful to its editors, G. B. Hill and L. F. Powell, for doing.

Having left Croker in shreds, Macaulay then deals with Boswell, who fares even worse. The invective rolls on relentlessly:

✪ DONALD GREENE's *The Politics of Samuel Johnson* was recently reissued in a second edition. He is the editor of *Political Writings*, volume 10, in the Yale edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson and of an anthology of Johnson's writings in The Oxford Authors series.

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Boswell was one of the smallest men that ever lived. . . . Johnson described him as a fellow who had missed his only chance of immortality by not having been alive when *The Dunciad* was written. Beauclerk used his name as a proverbial expression for a bore. . . . He was always laying himself at the feet of some eminent man, and begging to be spit upon and trampled upon. . . . Servile and impertinent, shallow and pedantic, a bigot and a sot, bloated with family pride, and eternally blustering about the dignity of a born gentleman, yet stooping to be a talebearer, an eavesdropper, a common butt in the taverns of London . . . logic, eloquence, wit, taste, all those things which are generally considered as making a book valuable, were utterly wanting to him.

Having disposed of the editor and the author of the work, Macaulay turns to its subject, Samuel Johnson. Johnson, too, was stigmatized as a Tory. But a great deal of Macaulay's commentary has to do with his physical appearance and lack of social finesse (not that the somewhat corpulent Macaulay was any great beauty, and he was notorious for monopolizing what was supposed to be a conversation):

That strange figure . . . the gigantic body, the huge massy face, seamed with the scars of disease, the brown coat, the black worsted stockings, the grey wig with its scorched foretop, the dirty hands, the nails bitten and pared to the quick—[let nail biters beware; there may be a Boswell or Macaulay among you. We laugh at] everything about him, his coat, his wig, his scrofula, his St. Vitus Dance, his rolling walk, his blinking eye . . . the perverse peculiarity of his hours.

Let late risers beware, too. Macaulay's apparent relish of Johnson's "scars of disease," scrofula, St. Vitus' dance (the last now diagnosed as Tourette's syndrome) is more than a little distasteful. "The ill-dressed, coarse, ungainly pedant," he calls him, and in other journalistic pieces, when he has the opportunity, he doesn't hesitate to take a smack at him: in his essay on Bunyan, Johnson is "the most pedantic of critics and the most bigoted of Tories"; in that on Fanny Burney, he is convicted of having corrupted the prose style in her later novels—pure fantasy on Macaulay's part.

As a critic, Johnson's mind "was hedged round by an uninterrupted fence of prejudice and superstition." He was a xenophobe, ignorant of anything except what could be found in central London: "His philosophy stopped at the first turnpike gate. Of the real life of England he knew nothing"; a judgment that so exasperated Hill and Powell that they included in their edition an eleven-page appendix tabulating Johnson's many long periods away from London—after all, it wasn't until he was nearly thirty that he came to live in London at all. He cannot write English, only a jargon that Macaulay christens "Johnsonese." His *Rasselas* is condemned because it does not depict the actual life of the "filthy savages" of Ethiopia (about which John-

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son, who in early life had translated the firsthand accounts of it in the Lobo-LeGrand *Voyage to Abyssinia*, probably knew a good deal more than Macaulay). His *Dictionary* is summed up with "The faults of the book resolve themselves, for the most part, into one great fault. Johnson was a wretched etymologist" and his edition of Shakespeare with "It would be difficult to name a more slovenly, a more worthless edition of any great classic." His political writings are "torrents of raving abuse." He is at last patronizingly dismissed with "The reputation of those writings which he probably expected to be immortal is every day fading," whereas "those peculiarities of manner and that careless table talk . . . are the only things about him that will be remembered"—a self-fulfilling prophecy if there ever was one. When the hardworking, conscientious student is assured from on high that Johnson's writings are deservedly forgotten, he is not likely to waste much time and energy perusing them. As the old saying goes, throw enough mud and some of it is sure to stick.

Had Macaulay left it at that, there would be little difficulty justifying the title I have given this essay; the work under review is the biography of a worthless writer, composed by a despicable author, and presented by a wretchedly incompetent editor. But in the midst of all this detraction—surprise, surprise!—we are taken aback to encounter this:

> The *Life of Johnson* is assuredly a great, a very great work. Homer is not more decidedly the first of heroic poets, Shakespeare is not more decidedly the first of dramatists, Demosthenes is not more decidedly the first of orators, than Boswell is the first of biographers.

Like the famous eighteenth-century racehorse Eclipse, Boswell is first: "He has no second."

Well, standards of biography before 1831 may not have been all they could have been, but it seems a bit drastic to relegate Plutarch, Suetonius, Tacitus, Vasari, Izaak Walton, Aubrey, not to mention Johnson himself, to the also-rans. I haven't checked the track records, but I have a suspicion that, after two centuries of careful breeding and training, some later horses, Secretariat perhaps, might have eclipsed Eclipse, and that, after two centuries of more demanding standards, some modern biographies might be superior to Boswell's. But scholars of eighteenth-century literature seem to be familiar with little biography beyond that century—Edel on Henry James, say, or Frank on Dostoyevsky, Ellmann on Joyce, Painter on Proust—and continue to genuflect reverently whenever the name of Boswell is mentioned. Intelligent people who are not eighteenth-century specialists and

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have probably never given the *Life* a careful reading (let alone Johnson's writings) repeat the knee-jerk reaction. Not long ago a correspondent of the *Washington Post*, indignant at a piece of mine which she thought insufficiently laudatory of Boswell, summed it up succinctly: "For the goods on Johnson, we turn first and finally to Boswell." And there's an end on't (as Johnson did *not* say).

The impulse to review my dealings with the *Life* comes from the accounts of recent celebrations of the bicentenary of its publication in 1791. For much of my life I have been an addict of biography, beginning in my teens, the heyday of Lytton Strachey, André Maurois, Harold Nicolson, David Cecil, and Philip Guedalla, authors of short but well-written and on the whole conscientiously researched biographies, and going on to longer and more solemn ones, such as John Morley's *Gladstone* (a colossal bore, now that I look back on it). Even yet, when I browse in a secondhand bookshop, I often come away with a battered biography of some nineteenth-century near-nonentity, and I spend more than I can afford on recently published ones.

Eventually someone—probably my mother, herself an omnivorous reader—suggested that it was time I came to grips with what everyone agreed was the world's greatest biography. So I got hold of a copy of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. I have seldom been so disillusioned. First, of course, there was what even devout Boswellophiles deplore—the incessant intrusion into it of the history and exploits of the Boswell family: the index to the Hill-Powell edition lists entries for twenty-one members of the clan apart from James himself, who gets twenty-seven *columns* of entries. For all I know, the Mack and Ehrenpreis and Ellmann families led lives as interesting as those of the Boswells, but when we read Maynard Mack's *Pope* or Irvin Ehrenpreis's *Swift* or Richard Ellmann's *Joyce*, we learn nothing about them. Why should we? Presumably we pick up the book in order to learn something about Pope or Swift or Joyce. The Stracheys were a considerably more interesting lot than the Boswells; one can read about them in Michael Holroyd's biography of Lytton. But one won't find out anything about them in Lytton's *Queen Victoria*.

Then there is Boswell's bizarre organization. Only one-sixth of the book is devoted to the first fifty-four years, intellectually the most active ones, of Johnson's life; the following five-sixths deals with his later twenty-two years, after Boswell crossed his path. And there is little artistry in the way that portion is arranged. The twenty-two annual installments between 1763 and 1784 begin with the sledgehammer "In 1769," "In 1770," "In 1771," and so on. It is as though Boswell had divided his desktop into twenty-two squares and dropped his materials by chronology into their proper compartments: first, the

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yearly installment of Johnson's literary production, so far as he knows it; then the year's quota of the letters Boswell has at his disposal—sometimes they are few or non-existent (unhappily, among the vast mass of paper Boswell left, the manuscripts of Johnson's letters to him are missing, so that we have to take the authenticity of their texts in the printed *Life* on trust); then a sprinkling of entries reprinted from Johnson's *Prayers and Meditations*, published six years earlier; finally, the major ingredient, the large chunks of entries from Boswell's diaries, recording his meetings with Johnson, if any, in that year. Even F. A. Pottle, the doyen of Boswellians, complained that "the construction of the *Life* . . . is remarkably unartificial. Boswell adopts a mechanical scheme which . . . settles down to an annual review, each section baldly headed by the year and Johnson's age in that year."

And of those twenty-two desktop squares, more than a third remained empty of excerpts from Boswell's diaries. In eight of the years after Boswell first encountered Johnson (1764, 1765, 1767, 1770, 1771, 1774, 1780, and 1782), Boswell, whose home was in Edinburgh, not London, was never in Johnson's company at all. In 1766, he saw him on only three days, in 1768 on five, and in 1769 on nine. The total number of days on which the *Life* reports meetings between Boswell and Johnson has been calculated as 227, averaging out to ten days a year during their acquaintance. So much for those who lament, apropos of someone whose conversational ability they admire, "Oh, if he only had a Boswell to take it all down!" and for those cartoonists who display Boswell, every day of his life, pursuing Johnson down a London street, pen and inkwell at the alert, recording each word he utters, punctuation and all. A recent scholar comments on Johnson's once giving Boswell a correction of a detail in the story of his quarrel with Chesterfield: "This kind of authoritative information was only to be obtained by someone who lived in close social intercourse with his subject." Meetings on an average of ten days a year—close social intercourse?

And accounts of their meetings sometimes consist only of a bare statement that the two were both guests at someone's dinner party. After all, on his visits to London, Boswell often found more attractive objects to pursue than taking tea with Johnson. In the *Life* one can read his entry for April 20, 1781:

> For some time after this day, I did not see him very often, and of the conversations which I did enjoy, I am sorry to find that I have preserved but little. I was at that time engaged in a variety of other matters, which required exertion and assiduity, and necessarily occupied almost all my time.

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"What a liar!" his editor, L. F. Powell, normally the mildest of commentators, seems to say:

> Boswell is here disingenuous. He met Johnson at least five times between 21 April and 8 May, and the matters that engaged his attention were not of so serious a nature as he implies. He was in fact at that time extremely dissipated. . . . It was on the 22nd that he got drunk at the Duke of Montrose's. . . . He met Johnson on the 28th at the Academy dinner, and again on the 30th. On 1 May after finding himself unfit, through drink, for an engagement, he "ranged." The next day he dined with Johnson. . . . On the 7th he called on Johnson, who greeted him with the admonition, "I hope you don't intend to get drunk tomorrow as you did at Paoli's."

At a dinner in Scotland in 1773, one of the guests (a Scottish bishop) reported that Johnson had declared that "George the Third is an idiot." Of that dinner, Boswell records, "Again I must lament that I was so indolent as to let almost all that passed evaporate into oblivion." Boswell's Victorian editor, Birkbeck Hill, disbelieved the report, on the grounds of "the impossibility of Boswell passing over such an outburst in silence." The cause of Boswell's oblivion on this and other occasions is not hard to guess.

Of course, to call the *Life* the world's worst biography is an exaggeration. By "worst" here I mean worst among major biographies still used as serious guides to their subjects' lives and works by educated readers who should know better. Outside that category, there are certainly worse ones, books whose authors do not have the grace, as Irving Stone in his best-selling *The Agony and the Ecstasy* did, to give them such a subtitle as "A *Novel* of Michelangelo," rather than "A *Life*." (Might it not be better to entitle Boswell's magnum opus "A *Novel* about Samuel Johnson"?) On the rare occasions when serious critics take the trouble to notice such productions, they are insistent that "the dull line of veracity" is a sine qua non of what purports to be a biography. Evelyn Waugh, reviewing a book about Rossetti, accuses the author of having "deliberately falsified her evidence" in order to make one of its characters ridiculous. Virginia Woolf, reviewing a biography of Mary Russell Mitford, is even more outspoken, giving its author the sobriquet of "Mendacity," and convicting her of forging "a pack of lies."

Thus we are impressed when Virginia Woolf, in a thoughtful essay called "The New Biography"—meaning biography after Lytton Strachey—gives the highest praise to Boswell:

> Boswell's astonishing power over us is based largely on his obstinate veracity, so that we have implicit belief in what he tells us. When Johnson says, "No, Sir,

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stark insensibility," the voice has a ring in it because we have been told soberly and prosaically, a few pages earlier, that Johnson "was entered a Commoner of Pembroke on the 31st of October, 1728, being then in his nineteenth year."

How did the legend of Boswell's "obstinate veracity" originate? As one might guess, with James Boswell himself. In his "Advertisement" to the first edition of the *Life* he proclaims:

> Were I to detail the books which I have consulted and the inquiries which I have found it necessary to make by various channels, I should probably be thought ridiculously ostentatious. Let me only observe, as a specimen of my troubles, that I have sometimes been obliged to run over half London, in order to fix a date correctly.

Many people have been taken in by this blatant piece of self-advertising (which also relieves Boswell from the need to become "ridiculously ostentatious" by indicating in a footnote, as a good modern biographer would do, the source of many of his assertions about Johnson). It apparently took in Virginia Woolf: she finds Boswell's specifying the date of Johnson's admission to Pembroke so astonishing that she is willing to believe any saying he attributes to Johnson. He did get that date right (though it had been given in many earlier biographies, and one might pedantically object that it was not in Johnson's nineteenth but his twentieth year). But when, a little later, she would have encountered, "He left the College in autumn, 1731, without a degree, having been a member of it a little more than three years," she would have run into a failure of Boswell's boasted "obstinate veracity" that still causes a great deal of trouble in Johnsonian studies.

To find the date of Johnson's leaving Pembroke, Boswell did not "run over" to Oxford to check the records of his enrollment. Instead, he relied on a note that William Adams of Oxford sent him. Adams got the date wrong by two years. The one who did look them up was the despised John Wilson Croker, who discovered that the last recorded time when Johnson was a student at Oxford was in December 1729. That date will be found in Hill-Powell and other properly annotated editions of the *Life* and of course in James L. Clifford's *Young Sam Johnson*, 1955, which has long superseded Boswell as the authority on Johnson's early years; it is of some importance in a young man's life whether he spends one or three years at college. But a host of current popular editions, such as Christopher Hibbert's in the Penguin Classics, continue to give Boswell's mistaken date without comment, as do such reference works as the *Cambridge Guide to English Literature*, 1983.

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It is amazing how many scholars naïvely go on taking Boswell's error as Holy Writ: "After all it's in Boswell, isn't it? And Boswell knows everything about Johnson that can be known, doesn't he?" Recently the enterprising Oxford historian Jonathan Clark, supported by Howard Erskine-Hill of Cambridge, made use of it to bolster his thesis that Jacobitism was alive and flourishing in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Johnson is described in Clark's index as a "nonjuror" (despite Johnson's frequent expressions of contempt for nonjurors—those clergymen of the Church of England who refused, after the deposition of James II from the throne, to swear allegiance to the new regime). The reasoning? If Johnson, having spent three years at Oxford, the normal length of time for earning a bachelor's degree there, left without taking one, it must have been because his Jacobitism was such as to prevent him from swearing the oaths of allegiance to George II and abjuration of the Stuart Pretender required to enable him to be granted a degree. Ingenious, but in fact no such oaths were required, and, thanks to Croker, we know that Johnson left the college long before he could have qualified to take a degree, no doubt because his money had run out.

Clark and Erskine-Hill reinforce their contention by citing a number of Boswell's anecdotes intended to prove that Johnson had Jacobite sympathies. First, there is the assertion that Samuel's father, Michael Johnson, on becoming sheriff of Lichfield in 1709, "reconciled himself, by casuistical arguments of expediency and necessity, to take the oaths required by the prevailing power." How Boswell, who was not born until thirty years later, could have known what went on in Michael's head he does not disclose. Then he tells the story of how "the infant Hercules of Toryism," as Boswell dubs Johnson, when less than three years old and when the High Tory firebrand Henry Sacheverell was to speak in Lichfield, insisted on being taken to hear him, "for young as he was, he had caught the publick spirit and zeal for Sacheverell." For once Boswell gives his source for this: a Mary Adey, who got it from her aunt, who got it from Miss Adey's late grandfather, who said he had witnessed the seventy-five-year-old scene. Anyone who has had anything to do with bringing up a child knows what to think of this story: one might as well talk of a two-and-a-half-year-old toddler demanding to be taken to hear a harangue by, say, Patrick J. Buchanan, because of his enthusiasm for the "right-wing" political philosophy espoused by Mr. Buchanan. Moreover, no one has ever turned up any evidence that Sacheverell gave a public address in Lichfield at the time. Both Boswell and Clark are impressed by the fact that Johnson lived near and frequented the Mitre

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Tavern, with its "orthodox High Church sound." They ignore that it was also patronized by a group of "radical" supporters of John Wilkes. And more of the same kind of "evidence."

It doesn't matter that Johnson, in a published survey of English political history, wrote, "The need of self-preservation impelled the subjects of James"—whose descendants the Jacobites wished to restore—"to drive him from the throne" and that he went on to cast ridicule on the idea that Bonnie Prince Charlie had any chance of attaining the crown. These are only things that Johnson *wrote* and published, and we know that his writings count for nothing beside Boswell's reports. But his supposed Jacobitism and "bigoted Toryism" have probably done more than anything else to create the Johnson myth that has held so many in its spell. Just what "Toryism" in general was during Johnson's lifetime and what Johnson's "Toryism" in particular was are difficult questions. What are we to make of his condemnation, by name, in *The False Alarm*, 1770, of the "frigid neutrality" of "the Tories" in the Wilkes affair?

Boswell considered himself a Tory. Yet in the *Life* he could roundly abuse *The False Alarm* and *Taxation No Tyranny*, which Johnson wrote in support of policies of the administration of Lord North, whom older histories call a Tory, though many historians since Sir Lewis Namier would vigorously disagree. What would the position of a "bigoted Tory" have been on the matter of Negro slavery? Johnson's vehement onslaughts, throughout his life, on that institution (and on the exploitation of native Americans by European invaders) can be extensively documented. Boswell, in the *Life*, prints a violent diatribe against Johnson's stupid, even immoral, views on the subject: "I beg leave to enter my most solemn protest against his general doctrine with respect to the Slave Trade." It is a "very important and necessary branch of commercial interest." Attempts in Parliament to abolish it are "wild and dangerous." Slavery is "a status that in all ages GOD has sanctioned." To abolish it would be not only "robbery to an innumerable class of our fellow-subjects"—the slave owners—but "extreme cruelty" to the Negroes themselves, whom slavery "introduces into a much happier state of life." Can we seriously regard someone who holds such beliefs as qualified to be an interpreter of Johnson?

Astoundingly, J. B. Bury, in his article on Gibbon in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, asserts, "Dr. Johnson and Boswell were opposed to the anti-slavery movement." Had he never encountered such observations of Johnson as that in *Idler* 81 concerning the early European invaders, who first enslaved the indigenous Americans and, "when the sword and the mines have destroyed the natives, they supply their place by human beings of another colour,

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brought from some distant country to perish here under toil and torture"—an accurate account of the post-Columbian history of the West Indies and elsewhere? Or Johnson's description of Jamaica in the *Literary Magazine*, 1756, as "a place of great wealth and dreadful wickedness, a den of tyrants and a dungeon of slaves"? Or his denunciation, in his introduction to *The World Displayed*, 1759, of "the English barbarians that cultivate the southern islands of America"? And much more to the same effect. Apparently not. Bury had read Boswell's *Life* and seemed simply to equate Johnson with Boswell. Why then bother to consult Johnson at firsthand?

Historians in particular seem to have been deeply under the spell of Boswell, or Boswell-Macaulay. Crane Brinton sets out to explicate Johnson's famous remark that "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel" (apparently authentic) by writing: "It is unfortunate that we so often quote [this] . . . without knowing what he really meant. He meant, of course, by 'patriot' the enlightened citizen of the world. . . . I think Johnson himself was an English 'patriot' in our modern sense of the word." Did Brinton arrive at that judgment by a careful reading of Johnson's pamphlet, *The Patriot*, 1774, where Johnson expounds the difference between true and false patriotism, or a consideration of Johnson's wide knowledge of and concern with the histories and cultures of other parts of the world than England? Evidently not. He seems to be extrapolating from Macaulay's denunciation of Johnson's xenophobia, no doubt largely derived from Boswell's (not Johnson's) pronouncement (discussed below) that "there is everything in London that life can afford."

H. R. Trevor-Roper was fond of condemning Johnson's "contempt for history": "He could see no history higher than chronicles or gazettes," no doubt relying on such a remark of his, quoted by Boswell, as "There is but a shallow stream of thought in history"—and perhaps an argument can be made for the truth of that proposition in British historiography before Gibbon (the remark was made four years before the beginning of the publication of the *Decline and Fall*). Ironically, Trevor-Roper then goes on to lament the neglect of Paolo Sarpi's history of the Council of Trent—Sarpi, "the greatest of seventeenth-century historians—'that incomparable historian,' as Gibbon calls him"—unaware that Johnson wrote a pioneering life of Sarpi and translated a sizable portion of his incomparable history.

A distinguished American historian was recently quoted as having characterized Johnson as "that bigoted Anglican." Did he come to this conclusion after a careful study of Johnson's religious *Prayers and Meditations* and the twenty-six or so sermons he composed, or a con-

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sideration of the admiration he and John Wesley expressed for each other, his veneration for the Baptist Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, his insistence on the inclusion of the Congregationalist clergyman Isaac Watts in his *Lives of the Poets*, or his pleasure at his friendly reception by the Benedictines of a Paris priory? As far as I can make out, the main source for such a judgment is Boswell's report that during their tour of Scotland in 1773, Johnson preferred to worship on a Sunday at a service of the Scottish Episcopal Church rather than at a service of the Presbyterian established Church of Scotland—surely a natural preference for one brought up an episcopalian—and that he lamented that the Convocations of the Church of England had been suspended by the government, whereas the Kirk of Scotland was permitted to hold its equivalent annual General Assembly—a justifiable complaint; the ban on the meetings of Convocations was lifted in the nineteenth century. It is interesting that these judgments by historians, all ultimately deriving from Boswell's *Life*, are consistently disparaging. Yet historians go on using, as a primary source, the speeches attributed to Pitt or Chesterfield in the Cobbett/Hansard *Parliamentary History of England*, often praising their rhetorical skill, unaware that what they are reading are the reports written up by Johnson, that despiser of history.

Next to the damning accusation against Johnson of "Toryism" is the charge that his prose is intolerably turgid, filled with "hard words," abstractions, and intricately constructed sentences. Even Virginia Woolf, a conscientious critic who seldom commented on a book without having read it carefully, fell into the trap of believing that Fanny Burney's prose was corrupted by Johnson: "Directly she read *Rasselas*, enlarged and swollen sentences formed on the tip of her childish pen in the manner of Dr. Johnson." Obviously Mrs. Woolf had not read *Rasselas*, which contains exquisite passages of simple English prose: for instance, a figurative version of the axiom that one cannot enjoy two mutually exclusive pleasures, "No man can taste the fruits of autumn while he is delighting his scent with the flowers of the spring; no man can, at the same time, fill his cup from the source and from the mouth of the Nile." Virginia Woolf herself could not have written a more beautiful sentence; of its forty words, it has been pointed out, thirty-seven are monosyllables.

Boswell was largely responsible for this, perpetrating a piece of what, if one does not want to call it, with Virginia Woolf, "mendacity," is at best sharp practice (Macaulay quotes it with relish, using it as his prime example of "Johnsonese"):

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He seemed to take a pleasure in speaking in his own style; for when he had carelessly missed it, he would repeat the thought translated into it. Talking of the Comedy of "The Rehearsal," he said, "It has not wit enough to keep it sweet."—He therefore caught himself, and pronounced a more rounded sentence; "It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction."

It makes a good story. We are allowed to think that Boswell was there, notebook at the ready, taking down the "translation" from Johnson's own lips. It seems to be a conflation of reports of two remarks made five years apart, at neither of which Boswell was present, being in Edinburgh as usual. On August 18, 1768, Helfrich Peter Sturz, a German scholar visiting England, recorded in his letters a talk with Johnson. The play, a satire on Dryden, had once been popular, but was no longer. Why? "There was too little salt in it to keep it sweet," said Johnson—a metaphor from pickling meat; "salt" (*Salz*), explains Sturz, is "wit." On July 18, 1773, Hester Thrale reported telling Johnson she regretted that Dryden's reputation had been hurt by the satire. "On the contrary," replied Johnson, "the greatness of Dryden's character is even now the only principle of vitality which preserves that play from a state of putrefaction"—just the opposite opinion from that which the Boswellian account has him expressing. Johnson knew the English language well enough to be aware that "vitality" and "wit" are not synonyms; the perversion has the effect of making Johnson seem a little stupid, and allows the reader to feel superior to him, which is no doubt why so many Boswellian anecdotes appeal to readers.

Boswell's failure to give any date or place for hearing the remark should, as with many of his other reports, make us suspicious. It occurs in the *Life* under 1784, the year of Johnson's death, in a long list of undated "particulars which I collected at various times." The fact is that Boswell had an enormous problem trying to compose primarily from personal recollection the biography of a man whom, for months or years at a time, he never saw or heard from, and he did his best to fill such gaps with anecdotes of no particular date, picked up from anywhere. Boswell lived at a time when readers had a passion for collections of "sayings" of celebrities. There were the "table talk," *Tischreden*, "ana" of Luther, Selden, Ben Jonson, Scaliger, Goethe, Coleridge, readable and on the whole respectable enough, though one biographer of Luther warns against using any item in *Table Talk* as evidence of Luther's views unless it is supported by a statement in his writings. There were also many disreputable collections, and Johnson was inevitably one of their victims. As early as 1776 the anonymous *Johnsoniana, or a Collection of Bon Mots* appeared: one reviewer wrote of it, "Most of the smart sayings are forged or invented."

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Boswell seemed to feel that one of his chief duties was to assemble as many of Johnson's "smart sayings" as he could lay his hands on, with little concern, by modern biographical standards, for verifying their authenticity—"Someone once heard Johnson say," and the like. Some of the best-known ones can be found in popular jest books, such as "Joe Miller's," published years before Johnson had been heard of: for instance, the riposte to an abusive boatman, "Sir, your wife, under pretence of keeping a bawdy house, is a receiver of stolen goods." (The "typically Johnsonian" "Sir" was added by Boswell, who lavishly sprinkled it over Johnson's "sayings.")

Often, of course, Boswell draws on entries in his own journals, but, also often, he doctors them heavily to make them more "picturesque" (or "highflavoured," as he compliments what he called the Johnsoniana furnished to him by one of his correspondents). One of the best-known and most often quoted "sayings" of Johnson is "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life, for there is everything in London that life can afford." As Boswell's journal for September 20, 1777, tells us, this originated, ironically, at Ashbourne, Derbyshire, 150 miles from London, where, as he often did, Johnson was spending some months revisiting his native Midlands. Pestered by Boswell, who was eternally seeking to obtain his approval for Boswell's moving permanently from Edinburgh to London, Johnson (he tells us) at last said grudgingly of London (perhaps in the hope of shutting Boswell up), "You find no man wishes to leave it" (though apparently Johnson found no difficulty in doing so). That was all. The ecstatic paean to London is all Boswell's.

A recent development in the Johnson myth has been the notion that he was a misogynist—this in spite of the fact that no man of his time had a greater admiration for intellectual women (Elizabeth Carter, Charlotte Lennox, Fanny Burney, to mention some) or was more anxious to give them encouragement and assistance. This may be a spin-off from the general proposition that he was a "bigoted Tory," of whom anything "reactionary" might be expected. But at least two of Boswell's best-known anecdotes give it support. Not long ago a professional friend of mine, not an academic, wrote me that one of his clients, a Ph.D. in comparative literature, told him that she couldn't stand Johnson because of his "sexism" as revealed in them. The first was his supposed condemnation of Lady Diana Beauclerk (née Spencer), who had been divorced by her first husband—whose brutal treatment of her won her much sympathy—on the grounds of adultery with Topham Beauclerk, whom she then married: "The woman's a whore, and there's an end on't." All we find in Boswell's notes is that on May 7, 1773, some sort of argument about the divorce

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took place, with Johnson finally exhorting Boswell, "Go to Scotland! Go to Scotland! I never heard you talk so foolishly." Professor Pottle commented that the later version was a "bold substitution" in the *Life*. Bold indeed; one wonders what Boswell's motives were for making it. Johnson continued to show much affection for Lady Diana, and he wrote with great compassion in *Ramblers* 170 and 171 about the unhappy lot of prostitutes, victims of an unjust society. Boswell's attitude toward them was very different. The other anecdote was Johnson's supposed remark, "Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all." Again, the background of this is murky. In the *Life* we are told that it was made after Boswell told Johnson that he had been at a Quakers' meeting and heard a woman preach there. In his diary entry for the day, however, Boswell says nothing about having heard a woman preach or having told Johnson that he did, and the circumstances in which Johnson made the notorious remark are not specified. Was it Johnson or Boswell who was the misogynist?

A third such quotation might be added: "A second marriage is the triumph of hope over experience," contributed to Boswell by an Irish clergyman, William Maxwell, in 1787, though it had earlier been printed in a collection of miscellaneous anecdotes. Both it and the one about a woman's preaching sound very much like jokes floating about in the public domain and attached to Johnson—a familiar practice of anecdotists: witness the host of them ascribed to Lincoln, Churchill, and other celebrities. They can be amusing, of course, as long as one doesn't take them seriously as revealing something of importance about the attitudes and opinions of their unwitting hosts, like those of hermit crabs, as one scholar says. One even begins to wonder about Johnson's kicking the stone and proclaiming, "I refute it thus." According to the *Life*—there is no journal entry for the day—the only witness of the incident was Boswell, and elsewhere in the *Life* he gives Johnson an unattested anti-Berkeleian joke that was evidently public property.

The United States Supreme Court recently ruled, in the case of *Masson v. Malcolm*, that if a reporter attributes a supposedly verbatim quotation to someone, he may be permitted to adjust grammar, spelling, and the like, but may make no substantive changes or additions to the person's words. If these tend to cast discredit on that individual's reputation, he may sue for libel. One wonders what, if it were possible, the outcome of a libel suit of *Johnson v. Boswell* might be. Apropos of second marriages, Boswell had in his possession a diary entry by Johnson recording, on the first anniversary of his wife's death, that he proposed the next day to go in search of a second wife.

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But in the *Life*, Boswell suppressed this, perhaps lest it spoil the effect of the "Johnsonian" quotation about hope and experience. After *Masson v. Malcolm* was heard by the Supreme Court, Miss Malcolm published a *mémoire justificatif* in the *New York Review of Books*, arguing that, after all, she was only doing what Boswell did. The unexpressed assumption, one supposes, is that if Boswell could get away with it, why couldn't she?

Much more could be added by way of warning to those who naïvely rely on the *Life* as the "first and final" authority on Johnson. Of its account of the making of the *Dictionary*, Thomas Percy, who knew Johnson long before Boswell did, noted acidly, "B. utterly ignorant of the Manner in w^{ch} Johnson collected Material for & composed his Dict." Percy was quite right. Yet histories of linguistics and lexicography still follow Boswell's lunatic description and use it to disparage Johnson's competence as a lexicographer. The *Life*'s text of the prayer that Johnson composed on his deathbed for his last communion silently omits the petition "forgive and accept my late conversion," surely of great importance in any discussion of Johnson's religion, though the authentic text had been printed in Hawkins's *Life of Johnson* and Boswell had access to Johnson's autograph manuscript of it. Why? Did Boswell think the mention of "conversion" made Johnson seem too much of an Evangelical and interfered with the stereotyped image of the "High Churchman" he wished to present?

Again, modern studies and editions have followed the corrupt text in the *Life*. Why did Boswell change all the "Mister Johnsons" in the manuscript of his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, which Johnson had seen and approved, to "Doctors" in the printed version, after Johnson's death? Like most sensible writers who have been given honorary doctorates, Johnson never used the appellation, scolded Boswell for trying to inflict it on him, and wrote acerbic things about the proliferation of doctorates. The persistent use of it, of course, makes Johnson seem absurdly pompous, as, say, Wordsworth and T. S. Eliot, Yeats and Gide, like Johnson, honorary Oxford D.C.L.'s, might seem if we regularly bestowed it on them. Did Boswell not suspect what the effect might be? Although we have been taught to think that Boswell had the utmost devotion and reverence for his "father figure," as Johnson has often been called, we know what the fate of father figures often is, and what Boswell's relations with his actual father were.

Of course there is much of value in Boswell's *Life*, if properly used. In calling it the world's worst biography, perhaps I am not criticizing Boswell so much as I am criticizing those scholars, even distinguished

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ones, who misuse it in a way they would not misuse any other two-hundred-year-old biographical source; they have been told and believed that, like the porcine dictator in *Animal Farm*, "Boswell is always right," echoed by his faithful flock of sheep. Of course no statement in the *Life* should be used without careful checking of its provenance and estimating the degree of authenticity it may possess, just as a good scholar would do with any other source he uses. As it is, I can think of no other book that (with Macaulay's help of course) has deterred so many intelligent people from making firsthand acquaintance with the work of a very great writer and thinker.

Forty years ago Bertrand Bronson published a famous essay on the double tradition of Johnson. The two traditions of course are the Johnson one encounters in the *Life* and the Johnson one encounters in his writings. "Picturesque" and amusing as the Boswellian Johnson may be, with his grotesque appearance and habits and his "bigoted" prejudices against Whigs, Scots, and Americans (never mind that he had friends among all of them), to which we can feel so superior, he should not be allowed to "eclipse" the far more rewarding Johnson of the other tradition. There have been two main defenses of the Boswellian version. One is that, though we may wonder about such discrepancies in his reporting as that of May 7, 1773, this was the result of Boswell's possessing a remarkable, almost supernatural, faculty of "total recall," a "photographic memory," that enabled him, eighteen years after the event, to snap his fingers and exclaim, "How careless of me! Now I remember that what Johnson said was not what I wrote down in my note at the time, 'Go to Scotland!' but 'The woman's a whore.' " As the Duke of Wellington said, "If you'll believe that, you'll believe anything" (certified authentic by the great Duke's modern biographer, Elizabeth Longford). The more recent and more dangerous one is that, although we must concede that a good deal of the *Life* is fiction, fiction is often more enjoyable than "the dull line of veracity." The classic expression of this view is found in the final sentences of the introduction to the (excellent) edition of Boswell's *Correspondence Relating to the Making of the Life* (with which anyone working with the *Life* should be familiar): "No matter how many new facts are brought to light, Samuel Johnson will always be somebody's hypothesis. And none has pleased so many, or is likely to please so long, as Boswell's." If the amount of pleasure it gives is the criterion of the acceptability of a hypothesis, no doubt many Germans in the 1930s and 1940s derived much pleasure from the Hitlerian hypothesis that they were the master race, though unfortunately that pleasure did not last for the promised thousand years.

No such article as this would be complete without a reference to

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Germaine Greer's famous philippic of 1986 (London *Times*, February 1). A few excerpts:

> Boswell's is the great biography. Why? Because Johnson is deemed to live in his pages. . . . He does not live in Boswell's pages, but in his own. . . . A gossip columnist of my acquaintance told me that he liked Boswell, because Boswell was just like him. Precisely. In recasting Johnson's self and voice in his own style, Boswell revenged himself for being less remarkable, less perspicacious, less magnanimous than his subject. . . . Transmitted through Boswell, Johnson became less. *The Vanity of Human Wishes* and *London* are worth all Boswell's scribbling, but they remain unread. Boswell is easier to take.

I'm not sure, though, that *The Vanity* and *London* remain unread, any more than Pope and Swift, a century or more after their Victorian dismissal by Arnold, Macaulay, and Thackeray, remain unread. You don't annihilate great literature that easily. Yet one continues to find such a recent rehearsal of Macaulay's old judgment on Johnson as this, by an eminent historian, writing in (deserved) praise of Gibbon: "Without his biographer [as though he had only one!], Dr. Johnson would probably be remembered most of all for his dictionary. . . . This is certainly not frequently read today. But *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* continues to be reprinted, read, and admired throughout the world."

But such Boswellolatry has been waning among a younger generation. During the past twenty-five years reprints of Johnson's *Dictionary*, both the first and the revised fourth editions, have been published in Germany, Beirut, Tokyo, New York, and London. How many full reprints of the *Decline and Fall*, masterpiece though it is, have there been in that time? In censuses of books and articles published during the past half century, more are found to have appeared on Johnson than on any other English writer of the eighteenth century; Swift and Pope come second and third; Boswell and Gibbon are also-rans. In the 1987 directory of the International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, in which its 7,000 members reported their scholarly interests, Johnson again heads the list of English writers with 191 names; Swift has 141; Pope 136; Boswell 41; Gibbon 14. In the 1991–92 directory of the 2,000 members of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, a similar ranking holds: Johnson 120; Pope 76; Swift 72; Boswell 21; Gibbon 9. The *Arts and Humanities Citations Index*, which annually lists references to the writings of various authors appearing in a large international group of scholarly and literary journals, gives these figures for recent years: 1989, Gibbon 39 entries, Johnson 110; 1990, Gibbon 42, Johnson 117; 1991, Gibbon 38, Johnson 124.

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Even though, as Germaine Greer satirically writes, once "a biographer has mastered his subject . . . the rest of us need no longer bother our heads about inconvenient notions the biographer's subject may have offered for our consideration," some readers seem actually to have begun to get more pleasure from considering such notions than from chuckling at Boswell's skillful presentation of his subject's eccentric dress, habits, and dubiously authentic "sayings." And Johnson offered many notions, often inconvenient, even subversive, ones. It is interesting and thought provoking to find, at a time of heated controversy over celebrating Columbus's "discovery" of America, that Johnson could write that it would have been better for the human race if Columbus had never been born, and, in *Idler* 81, perhaps the bitterest denunciation ever written of the oppression of native Americans (and imported African slaves) by the European invaders.

It was not Boswell who introduced me to Johnson. As with many young and some older people, the *Life* at first put me off "the Great Cham" (a phrase extracted by Boswell from a private letter by Smollett to Wilkes, which the *Life* permanently affixed to Johnson). But eventually I discovered him on my own and found in his writings the "logic, eloquence, wit, and taste," the absence of which in Boswell Macaulay deplored. (But how can a biography lacking those qualities be the world's greatest?) Yet we may give Boswell credit for sometimes passing a valuable judgment on Johnson the writer and thinker. Although he denigrates Johnson's political writings and is lukewarm about others, although he becomes almost hysterical over Johnson's perverse opposition to Negro slavery, he gives *The Rambler* its due in a memorable remark: "I venture to say that in no writings whatever can be found more *bark and steel for the mind*; more that can brace and invigorate every manly and noble sentiment." The bitterness of quinine bark and the supposed strength-enhancing power of ferric compounds were often combined to form a healing "tonic" for the human frame. As Johnson wrote when, in his devastating castigation of Soame Jenyns's dilettantish attempt to solve the age-old puzzle of the origin of evil, he encountered a passage with which he could agree, "Si sic omnia dixisset!"—would that he had always spoken thus!

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Orange Juice with General Perón

A Memoir

MARK FALCOFF

In the fall of 1967 I went to live in Argentina for a year's research on my doctoral dissertation, a study of the ideological origins of Peronism. Even then, the subject was far from purely academic. Though a dozen years had passed since General Perón had departed in disgrace for foreign exile, Peronism—an ill-defined mélange of populism, personalism, and nationalism—remained the defining political faith of at least four out of ten Argentines. Though the Justicialist movement, as it styled itself, was technically proscribed by the military government of the day, there were Peronists all over the place. After less than six months in the country, it became apparent to me that Perón himself (then living in far-off Madrid) was recovering much of the support that he had lost in his final years of power (1954–55), when his quarrel with the Catholic church and his mismanagement of the economy had turned the Argentine middle class—and even more important, the Argentine armed forces—decisively against him. I became convinced that if an honest election were ever held during his lifetime, he would be returned to power by a decisive majority.

Like most foreigners, I was fascinated by the persistence of Peronism, an ideology that defied conventional classification in social science: whatever it might be, Peronism was clearly something more than just a South American variety of fascism. My working hypothesis (I admit now that it was far from remarkable) was that this phenom-

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enon could only be understood on its own terms—that is, within the very peculiar context of Argentine history. Thus I decided to center my research on the decade and a half immediately before Perón's appearance on the political scene.

II

The best place to start my quest was the first floor of the old National Library, where the dusty bound volumes of period newspapers were then stored. As any scholar who works with old periodicals soon learns, some of the most useful information is gleaned not from articles dealing with the ostensible subject of the research but from the apparently superfluous addenda—even social notes or advertisements. In the 1930s Argentina possessed three or four daily newspapers of serious quality, and working through them gave me an extremely illuminating look into the country's worldview. In spite of distances, Argentines felt very much involved in the great events of the day—the Soviet five-year plan; the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and Mussolini's decision to flout the League of Nations; the Spanish civil war; the rise of National Socialism in Germany; and finally, the Second World War. These events were heatedly debated, not only in press and parliament, but also on streetcars and in cafés.

There were, I think, two reasons for this. One—the most obvious—is that like the United States but unlike other Latin American nations, Argentina was and is a country of immigrants, the most "European" country of Latin America. In this case, most of the newcomers came from Spain and Italy, countries deeply affected by the ideological convulsions of our century. Moreover, Argentines of Italian or Spanish origin—here an important difference with the United States—managed to maintain a close and continuous relationship with their countries of origin. Until war put an end to easy transatlantic travel, there was much movement back and forth by families or parts of families. Thus events in 1930s Europe were laden with more than just academic interest.

The other reason is that massive European immigration—concentrated in a few short, intense years just before the First World War—tended to postpone the evolution of a genuine sense of Argentine nationality until well into mid-century. True, children of immigrants were dutifully taught Argentine history and patriotic myths in school, and Spanish (spoken with a slight, actually quite lovely Italian lilt) remained the language of politics and public business. But taken as a whole, as late as the 1930s the "melting pot" had not melted all that much. Of course, this did not make Argentina "European" in the

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fullest sense of the word. Rather, it had become one of those curious principalities living on the periphery of European culture and receiving everything from it a bit distorted and secondhand—somewhat like late 1930s Rumania as depicted by Olivia Manning in her magnificent *Balkan Trilogy*.

The resemblances between the two countries for my period were uncanny. Like Rumania, Argentina possessed an elite that preferred French to the local language to distinguish itself from the hoi polloi; a capital city consciously modeled on Paris; a particularly reactionary form of Catholic Christianity, which in turn nourished a low-grade (but persistent) anti-Semitism; a fragile and uncertain commitment to economic and political liberalism; above all, a pervasive fear of missing the bus of history—or worse still, of accidently jumping on the wrong line.

But the comparison with pre-war Rumania can be carried a bit too far. True, many Argentines of the period imagined that some sort of fascism was the wave of the future, and they were attracted to such colorful epiphenomena as uniformed "nationalist" movements. But by no means everyone in the country was so certain that democracy was finished—and considerable anti-Fascist militance emerged within the ranks of organized labor and the intellectual classes. There was, for example, very strong support for the embattled Spanish Republic; Argentina even sent several hundred volunteers to fight in the International Brigades. Partisans of the democratic cause in parliament managed to establish a Committee on Un-Argentine Activities (no misprint) to investigate the role of Axis agents or other purveyors of "foreign political ideologies." While the Argentine government remained neutral in the Second World War, people interested in politics divided in half, though the fault line ran, I learned, rather irregularly. This reflected an ambivalence toward bourgeois democracy that pervaded many elements of national life—not just those on either extreme of the political spectrum.

The principal difference with Rumania, however, was that, thanks to extreme geographical remoteness, Argentina completely escaped the most important consequence of the Second World War—the radical partition of Europe into Communist and non-Communist territories, and with it, forcible ascription to one of two opposing ways of life. Evidently, the country avoided Soviet influence altogether, but unlike, say, Italy or Germany, it did not replace the pre-war structures with a more modern version of capitalist democracy. Instead, with the coming of Perón and his own "ism" in 1946, the country lurched into an ideological experiment of its own, in which all of the competing political trends of the pre-war period were jumbled together in new

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and confusing combinations. That is, both Peronists and anti-Peronists were drawn from pro- and anti-Fascist political forces of the prewar period.

Thus whatever its unpleasant features, this new Argentine political phenomenon was not to be confused with classical fascism. Rather, Peronism was a kind of Argentine New Deal, complete with new government agencies that pre-empted much of the economic space formerly reserved to a handful of private businesses and agricultural enterprises. It created a modern labor movement, the most powerful in Latin America. It gave women the right to vote. And it delivered services like education, housing, medical services, and nutrition to long-neglected regions and social groups. Like the New Deal, too, though it often brandished the language of radical economic redress, in the end it strengthened the power of the middle class even more than the labor movement.

To be sure, these things were not done in a particularly gentle way, and not always efficiently or honestly either. Loyalty to the leader, his wife, and their movement became the overarching criterion of civic virtue—and, often, eligibility for government largess. Up to that point, Perón's quasi-dictatorship simply replicated the experience of neighboring Latin American countries.

What gave Peronism a peculiar sociology of its own, however, was the way it cleaved Argentine society along vertical rather than horizontal planes. The controlling vectors of Peronism and anti-Peronism were, in fact, values and sensibilities rather than just conventional economic interest. Instead of pitting class against class or party against party, Peronism systematically divided each down the middle—conservatives who believed in the rule of law and the sanctity of contract versus those who preferred to sacrifice these to order, hierarchy, and the styles of authoritarian rule; labor leaders who cherished the autonomy of their own institutions versus those who were prepared to support whomever could "deliver the goods"; businessmen who preferred "sweetheart" deals with the government versus those who chafed at bureaucratic restrictions and structured inefficiencies; clericals avid to control the state's educational system versus those churchmen troubled by an emerging idolatry of President Perón and his wife; intellectuals obsessed with anti-communism versus those for whom democracy was a virtue above and apart from specific electoral outcomes.

To make matters more confusing, the fall of Perón in 1955 did not cleanly reverse the pattern and impose virtue and probity in place of personalism and demagoguery, jobbery and corruption. Too much had happened in the meantime to embitter old-fashioned liberals

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and conservatives, or even socialists. This meant that in practice not all triumphant anti-Peronists turned out to be democrats, and not all democrats were willing to stand by their values if free and fair elections threatened to restore the Unspeakable to power. Thus if Peronism was difficult to define ideologically, so, too, was anti-Peronism. It could be of the Left or the Right, either civilian or military, Catholic or anti-clerical. The only thing that was certain was that until the two halves of the apple of discord were somehow reunited, the country would remain almost impossible to govern.

III

After going through the public prints, I decided to seek out old Peronists to cross-examine ideologically. The multiplicity of types, I must allow, was frankly bewildering. As I expected, quite a few had started out in the old Radical party, the country's largest populist force before the advent of Perón, but some had begun their political life in the old Conservative or Socialist parties; there was even an occasional ex-Communist. Each was convinced that his version of Peronism was the genuine article, had the support of the exiled leader, and would be restored to power in the fullness of time. By closing off debate and political competition, the Argentine establishment had thus assured the survival of a coalition of often contradictory interests that would eventually dislodge it from power.

The old Peronists were held together, of course, largely by the conviction that times had been better during the general's period of rule. In this they were not wrong, at least in the narrowest technical sense. Things *had* been better in the late forties. But, as a few upper-class people of my acquaintance were quick to point out, the country's decline actually began during Perón's second term in the early fifties, the consequence (they insisted) of his ruinous mismanagement of national resources. In many ways they were right. But resurrecting pre-Perón Argentina lay beyond the realm of possibility; the proof, if one required it, was the inability of any government, military or civilian, to rule successfully in its place. On the other hand, as long as Perón remained alive and in apparent readiness to return, it was possible to fantasize an immediate restoration of good times gone by.

This led to a perceptible seepage back toward Peronism on the part of the Argentine middle class. But it was evident as well among the younger generation, though there it assumed a somewhat different guise. I discovered this on my own at the University of Buenos Aires, where I was auditing classes on modern Argentine history. At

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first glance, the Communists appeared to be the leading political force on campus, which, given their superior discipline and organizational skill, was not really surprising. A closer look, however, revealed Marxism to be in sharp decline as an ideological force, slowly but firmly being supplanted by the argument that, whatever the order of the day might be in other Latin American countries, the way to be revolutionary in Argentina—to be really revolutionary—was to be some sort of Peronist.

This was quite a departure, since during Perón's presidency Argentine universities had been a virtual hotbed of student opposition. And no wonder: during the 1940s Perón had packed the administrations with Catholic Fascist lawyers, who in turn cashiered many distinguished socialist and liberal academics. But Perón had also strengthened and greatly expanded the Argentine labor movement, causing workers to abandon their traditional loyalties to the Socialist and Communist parties. Both these groups had important student branches, and opposition to Peronism put their militants in the 1940s in the rather uncomfortable situation of having to take up positions opposite the very working class on whose behalf they claimed to speak. After Perón's fall, the traditional left-wing parties rushed to recapture the ground they had lost in the labor movement. Although Peronism was officially proscribed, they never succeeded in doing so. Argentine workers remained—in 1955, in 1960, in 1968—unshakably loyal to the exiled leader.

Over time this was bound to have an important influence on academics and intellectuals. For anyone who thought of himself as "of the Left"—and that of course included many students and not a few professors—it was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a firmly anti-Peronist stance, since as far as the Argentine working class was concerned, Peronism remained the only political show in town. Leftist intellectuals, most of them from middle- or even upper-middle-class homes, were also very sensitive to the charge that their anti-Peronism constituted an indirect endorsement of the military government of the day, and with it the hateful status quo. (The fact that the argument was specious and self-serving did nothing to temper its ideological sting.)

Meanwhile, a group of prominent ex-leftists had begun to rewrite the history of the Peronist period from a decidedly "revisionist" point of view. Their gravamen was that the Socialists and Communists had made a serious historic error during the 1940s; instead of surveying the Argentine situation and accurately assessing the real situation of workers, they argued, their comrades had gotten bogged down in European ideologies irrelevant to the local situation, or they had allowed foreign powers (in this case, Britain, the United States, or the

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Soviet Union) to dictate what should have been a purely Argentine agenda. One of these dissident Marxists, an ex-Trotskyite by the name of Juan José Hernández Arregui, electrified a student audience in my hearing by declaring that "the choice is to be with Perón and the working class, or to be against the working class. I, for my part, am with the working class."

Somewhat after my time in Argentina, an entire theory was hatched to explain how, objectively, Perón, once returned to power, *would have no choice* (the emphasis was always added) but to implement the Marxist revolutionary agenda. I found these theories frankly bizarre, though they played no small role in the events surrounding Perón's re-election in 1973 and the sanguinary events that followed his death in 1974. But Perón himself did little to discourage them, even to the point of receiving in Madrid Argentine student leaders of a type that would have ended up in his jails or in exile a generation before.

At a certain point in a research project, the material often raises more questions than answers. This was certainly the case with me. Was Peronism, I wondered, becoming something different from what it had originally been? But then, what had it been originally? Why was it possible to find so many different kinds of people responding to the same political label? What would happen if the founder and leader of the movement were to return to Argentina and, therefore, be forced to choose among them? In effect, what would happen if past and present were suddenly compressed into one?

IV

The one person with whom it would be most useful to discuss these matters was living on another continent and presumably no more accessible to an American graduate student than His Holiness in the Vatican. There is such a thing as a successful long shot, however, and I decided to take it. One evening I was having dinner with one of my professors at the university, a quiet, modest man who had come over to Peronism from Christian Democracy. I knew him to be one of the country's rising Peronist intellectuals, and therefore presumably in contact with the exiled leader in Madrid. At one point in our discussion I asked, as casually as I could manage, whether he thought it would be both useful and possible for me to discuss my thesis topic with General Perón himself. Much to my surprise, he looked up from his plate and said, "Absolutely. I think it would be an excellent idea." "Do you really think you can arrange it?" I asked. Without hesitating, he said, "Yes."

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I wrote Perón a letter outlining my work and asking for an interview sometime during the next two months. I enclosed a letter of introduction from my professor. Both of these went into an envelope addressed, not to Perón, but to a young functionary of the Spanish Falange who had apparently been delegated to receive correspondence from Argentina on his behalf, thus circumventing local postal censorship. A couple of weeks later, returning from a brief visit to neighboring Uruguay, I found an unfamiliar envelope in my accumulated mail bearing a Madrid postmark and no return address.

It was a fairly lengthy letter from Perón, full of references to the topic and offering to see me within the time frame I had suggested. He even included his private phone number so that I could arrange my appointment with his secretary, José López Rega. (The name meant absolutely nothing to me.) There was nothing left to do but buy an airline ticket, shut down my Buenos Aires operation, and fly off to Spain, a country I had never before visited. I went about my business in a state of barely contained euphoria until the time came to leave.

The trip from Buenos Aires to Madrid took about seventeen hours—flying at night with stops in São Paolo and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, thence across the Atlantic to the Canary Islands, touching Spanish soil shortly after noon the following day. Accustomed to the somewhat down-at-the-heels appearance of Buenos Aires, I was stunned by the order and cleanliness of Madrid. While the Franco dictatorship was reputed to be far more repressive than the one I had just left behind in Argentina (and for all I know, was), the general air was more cheerful and optimistic, and people seemed more prosperous and better dressed.

As far as I could gather, the relationship between Franco and Perón was curious and delicate; officially the two men had never met (a story that almost nobody believed). Perón was personally very popular among working-class Spaniards; one of the principal avenues of the capital was even named after him in gratitude for the shipments of wheat he had sent to the peninsula in 1946 and 1947, when the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union were jointly trying to oust Franco from power by means of an economic embargo (or as the Spaniards put it, "when you were trying to starve us to death").

After allowing myself two days to get used to the change in time, I drew out Perón's letter and phoned his villa. López Rega was not there when I phoned, but when he returned my call we agreed to a date at ten in the morning two days hence. Perón's secretary urged me to take careful notes on how to get to the house; this proved to be

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sound counsel, since no taxi driver was familiar with the area, and without the instructions I doubt we would ever have found it. The villa was, in fact, situated at the end of a maze of heavily wooded streets in Puerta de Hierro, a luxurious if then somewhat distant suburb of Madrid much preferred by foreign embassies for their residences.

The house itself was not visible from the road. Instead, there was a high wall and a huge sheet of metal painted black that masked the driveway. Into this a small access door had been cut. Standing in front of it was a conservatively dressed Spaniard in shirtsleeves whom—for reasons to be explained later—I have since concluded was an officer of the Spanish Civil Guard. I paid the driver and approached the sentinel, whose only remark to me was, "Your last name, please?" When I gave it, he pointed to the access door and bid me enter.

The driveway, it turned out, descended some feet to a large stone house sitting in the center of a European-style park. Before I had a chance to take all this in, I noted a familiar figure on the veranda. Even in a crowded room I would have had little difficulty picking him out. With his dark glasses and commanding stature (well over six feet), Perón looked like nothing so much as an exiled South American dictator at leisure. As I descended the driveway, I debated briefly how to greet him. Finally I decided it was best to fall back on Argentine military protocol; I saluted him and said, "Buenos días, mi general."

That seemed to touch the right button. He shook my hand, asked what brought me to Spain, expressed feigned disbelief that I had come only to see him, and bid me inside. We passed through a long hall and turned left into a study that ran half at least the depth of the house. The room was sparsely furnished, with a globe and two Louis XIV throne chairs at one end and a large desk at the other. Perhaps to impress me with his strength and vigor, he picked up one of the throne chairs and carried it all the way to the front of the room, where he deposited it for my use in front of his desk. He signaled that I should sit down, clapped his hands, Spanish-style, and ordered a servant to bring us some orange juice.

According to his official biography, Perón was then seventy-three years old. He did not seem it until one looked closely at the details of his face. The broad features were familiar but had lapsed into a coarse replica of the mask that adorned so many posters on walls or small banners in buses or taxis. In particular I noticed a red splotch (I could not determine whether it was a birthmark or some degenerative condition) just below his eye on the right-hand side. It was too large to overlook, yet it never showed up in any photograph, which leads me to believe that he never went anywhere without covering it with some cosmetic application.

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Perón had a very distinctive style of speaking, employing his hands frequently for emphasis. I would say of him what Clarence Darrow says of William Jennings Bryan in the stage version of *Inherit the Wind*: he was capable of strutting even while sitting down. Perón did not, in fact, converse in the ordinary sense, at least not with strangers like me. He did not even discourse in the way of many chiefs of state I have since met. Instead, he gave a speech, in which there was very little opportunity to interrupt, pose a question, or follow it up. The only thing missing was the balcony and the adoring masses below it. I had been warned that if he was bored he wouldn't smoke, but in fact he lit up almost immediately, and during the more than two hours we were together he consumed two full packs. ("I don't believe cigarettes cause cancer," he said. "You've proved it," I replied.) His smoking not only reassured me but also marginally improved the prospects of dialogue, since almost the only time I was able to get a word in edgewise was when he was spitting into the wastebasket.

I sat down and looked around. The house was, I confess, greatly different from my expectations. Perhaps too much under the influence of Hollywood films, I imagined that it would be somewhat baroque in style, with heavy red drapes and dark furniture, and a sinister aide lurking behind every arras. I expected, too, a rather elaborate secretariat, with maps of Argentina and the latest in communications equipment. None of this turned out to be the case. The house was large and comfortable, but it was modern, unpretentious—tastefully austere. And, as far as I could gather, political business was conducted from Perón's hip pocket. Late in the interview, for example, López Rega arrived with the day's mail, and they sorted it out together.

V

As soon as I activated the small cassette tape recorder I had brought with me, Perón launched into a lengthy lecture on world history since 1917—seen, of course, from his very idiosyncratic perspective. The leitmotif was the struggle for the world between the United States and Great Britain, with the latter finally conceding the Western hemisphere to the United States in—of all things—the Atlantic Charter. Then, suddenly, he shifted to the autobiographical, recounting his experiences as Argentine military attaché in Europe in 1939 and 1940. He chose to settle in Italy because "a very interesting experiment was under way there."

"An interesting experiment, you mean fascism?" I asked.

"From 1917 on, the world was divided into huge, let us say imperialistic poles," he lectured me. "In the face of these two colossi of

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domination, one Communist, one capitalist, there emerged a third position within the sphere of ideologies." That position, he emphasized, could best be characterized by the term "national socialism." This was not to be confused with fascism alone, he added, since national socialism is, after all, "the ideology of two-thirds of the countries in the world today."

I must have expressed some surprise, because he then went on to say—and now I am quoting verbatim—

> Look at the Nordic countries—the most civilized in the world; they are socialist monarchies. The Low Countries, too, are socialist monarchies. The British Empire [*sic*] is a socialist monarchy. . . . Germany—one sector is Social-Democratic, that is to say, Marxist, and one, Christian Democrat, that is to say, neo-capitalist. They have joined forces and are governing together, with a neosocialist system.
>
> Italy is the same way. The Middle East, all socialist republics. In Africa, the thirty black nations, all with socialist systems. This country [Spain] they call a state, a kingdom, which is *national syndicalist* because [and here a pause for effect] they are afraid of the word "socialist." [laughter] But what they say—I'm not sure it's what they really do—but what they say has the genuine flavor [of fascism]. Naturally, because these people were Fascists during the civil war. The side that was victorious, without doubt it was Fascist.

Returning to the subject of Mussolini's Italy, Perón expressed serious reservations about the way it had put "national socialism" into practice.

> I didn't like it—I didn't like it in the *form* it assumed. I spoke an hour with Mussolini. I told him. The form of execution was bad. But Italy was Mussolini at that time. In contrast to Germany: Hitler might have been Germany, but if he hadn't existed his place would have been taken by someone else.

"What do you mean about the form?" I pressed. "Could you go into that in greater detail?"

"In the ideology they did not err; the proof is that today, forty years later, two-thirds of the world is in the position they advocated. . . . But the methods they used to achieve this—*there* is where they went wrong."

"How did Mussolini fail in his realization? I mean, not so much in international policy but in the internal politics of Italy?"

"I'll tell you how he failed," Perón replied.

> I told *him*. In 1939 Mussolini received me in Rome. . . . The entire realization of their ideological conception [was based] on three grand promises . . . (1) "Fascism or death," fascism or nothing, civil death; (2) the monarchy should

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be replaced by a republic; and (3) a popular militia should replace the standing army. If they had done all of this, well, fascism would have consolidated itself in Italy, would have moved forward, in spite of everything.

But what happened? All the while that Mussolini was in government . . . there persisted a living socialist party, international, dogmatic, Marxist—which was in open warfare against him. . . . Mussolini didn't create the republic he promised. He created a popular militia, but he failed to supplant the army. The two forces subsisted side by side.

These three, labor, monarchy, army, were potential enemies *(enemigos en potencia)*. . . . The moment Mussolini weakened . . . the three threw out their restraints and took power under Bagdolio, the Army, by order . . . of the King. And who supported it? A popular sector, which is socialism. . . .

Mussolini was a great man, no denying that. A great man. But Italy was a very difficult country in which to carry out a project like that.

These were, I knew, the views of many Italian Fascists who played a role in the Salò republic after 1943 and whose apologias sold very well in Buenos Aires bookshops. But at the same time, what Perón had to say about Italy could be said pari passu about his own regime in Argentina. Despite its claims to being "revolutionary," it left most of the structures of economic and social power intact—particularly the great landowners, the church, and the armed forces. Was this Perón's form of indirect self-criticism? Or was this his way of seeming more left-wing than he really was? Or did he really regard the Italian experiment as something upon which he had improved?

Before I could press this line of questioning, Perón had moved on to talk about his travels in Western Europe. Besides Italy, he said, he went to Germany, then to Spain (where the civil war had ended a mere six months before). Here I saw another ideologically pregnant topic and pressed for his views on the Spanish conflict. All he would offer is that he went around talking to "both the Republicans and the Nationals . . . so that I could impartially form an idea of what this was all about." He studiously avoided drawing any lessons from the Spanish tragedy, even though his biographers in Argentina habitually emphasized that his firsthand view of the consequences of civil war had influenced not only his policies of economic redistribution, but also his decision to quit the country in 1955 rather than call upon his followers to rise up in his defense.

Perón continued his travelogue—to Russia, along the eastern Prussian frontier, Portugal, the Low Countries, Scandanavia. "I formed a concept," he concluded. "Intuitively, I sensed the direction of the future." The coming war was an attempt to stop "a nascent evolution." "Neither National Socialist nor Fascist, but an evolution which cannot be stopped by cannons. On the contrary, war tends to accelerate these evolutions."

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VI

Perón returned to Argentina in 1940 and began to speak to his fellow officers about these things. ("Military men said I was a Communist. Me! Naturally, I had to speak about the phenomenon of socialism—I myself have no problem with the word 'socialism'[ha ha ha], but when they hear the word they see you coming with a bomb in your hand!") Then, he claimed, a group of young officers, mostly his former students at the National War College, came to him in late 1941 or early 1942 and urged him to stage a coup to put these (murky) concepts into practice. This I knew to be, at best, about 20 percent of the truth; the coup out of which he emerged as the most important single figure (but over a period of nearly two years) was made by others, with very different initial objectives.

Perón was right, though, to characterize the country to which he had returned as awash in conspiracies. These had largely to do with the efforts of President Roberto M. Ortiz to end a system of electoral fraud that had been in place since 1932, to which he owed his own accession, and which virtually assured the rule of a coalition of conservative parties in perpetuity. In 1940, however, President Ortiz was forced to take an indefinite medical leave because of severe diabetes that affected his vision. His vice president, Ramón S. Castillo, a hardliner who had a more astringent view of universal suffrage, immediately reversed his predecessor's policies. Argentines were scheduled to select a new administration altogether in late 1943, and Castillo had already decided that his successor should be Conservative Senator Robustiano Patrón Costas, whose huge personal fortune included sugar refineries, oil, and railroads in Argentina's arid north.

At the same time, World War II was reaching a decisive phase. Most Argentines still anticipated an Axis victory, a prospect that was viewed with mixed emotions by the Argentine establishment and Conservative party. Though Castillo himself was a firm partisan of neutrality, his designated successor—like many Conservatives—had strong business, personal, and cultural links with Great Britain and was therefore reputed to be pro-Allied. On the other hand, the apparent invincibility of Axis forces seemed to suggest a new "wave of the future" on which side it would do well for Argentina to range itself. This was particularly the view of the sons of the elite, many of whom joined quasi-Fascist "nationalist" groups.

Neither Conservative fathers nor nationalist sons saw anything wrong with electoral fraud, but the latter saw no reason to go to the polls at all if the pre-arranged result was someone like Patrón Costas. The latter's allegedly pro-British attitudes also deeply troubled junior-

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and middle-level officers in the Argentine army. Whether these fears were really justified is beside the point; it was to prevent an apparently pro-British Conservative from taking power (and conceivably, compromising the country's neutrality) that the military had overthrown Castillo on June 4, 1943.

I found it interesting that Perón expressed no interest whatever in the "nationalist" groups, even though they constituted an important part of his early civilian constituency. ("It was a nationalism of *lyrical* expression," he told me. "It was always that in our country. It still is. . . . Afterwards, nationalism was taken over by gangsters and fell into the hands of whoever gave its leaders money.")

The truth is that Perón knew how to use Argentine nationalism when he needed it and discard it when he did not. (The reverse was also the case.) Between 1943 and 1944, first as war minister and then as vice president, he posed as the firmest advocate of neutrality; when the tide turned and it was obvious the Axis was going to lose the war, and Argentina was in danger of being excluded from the emerging United Nations Organization, he had no difficulty switching sides, even to the point of approving a very tardy declaration of war against Germany and Japan. Moreover, during the early years of his presidency, people recruited from nationalist groups fleshed out most of the government offices having to do with education, culture, and religious affairs; once he began to quarrel with the Roman Catholic church, they were relieved of their posts or resigned. (Many found their way into the conspiracy that eventually deposed him.)

Now Perón launched into a wildly favorable account of his two presidential terms, the second of which was, of course, truncated by a coup. It was embarrassing to listen straight-facedly to things I knew to be contrary to the truth, but I saw no point in interrupting him. Apparently not a single mistake was ever made, even by one of his aides. He did not even attempt to explain why it was that after nine years of uninterrupted economic growth and social betterment he was overthrown to wide (if temporary) popular acclaim.

Now Perón was really warming to his subject, which was current affairs. Pounding the table, he assured me that "if national socialism does not triumph in the world, then *international* socialism will." The United States, he insisted, was pursuing policies contrary to its own national interests. ("The U.S. is playing the game of Moscow without meaning to.") He particularly objected to countries such as Argentina having to pay royalties on foreign patents, or being obliged to repatriate capital earned on foreign investment. "Bad as is your economic policy," he continued, "your political methods are worse, your political methods are worse. . . . If you don't like the policies of any Latin

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American government, you start a revolution against it." He even claimed that the United States and Britain had played a vital role in his overthrow; when I started in amazement—it was the first time I had ever heard this—he said, "Yes, by provisioning the rebels with ammunition from the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands."

I sighed, "I can't imagine why."

He replied, "You're right: I don't know why either—we weren't enemies of the United States."

VII

I could see Perón was getting tired and perhaps a bit bored, since he now jumped from topic to topic in no particular order. Try as I might, it proved impossible to get him back on the track of Argentine events, particularly those relating to the period of my dissertation. But it may be of some interest to record a few of his remarks nonetheless. On the Alliance for Progress: "At the time of the meeting at Punta del Este, I wrote a letter to President John Kennedy. He sent an aide out to speak to me for three days . . . what was his name? Some Irishman. Kennedy agreed completely with the concepts in my letter." He spoke approvingly of Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who was then fighting to succeed Lyndon Johnson (like most Latin Americans, Perón disliked and distrusted Richard Nixon). On Czechoslovakia, then under the reform government of Dubček: "We want the socialism of fatherlands, not the reverse. . . . Look how much better the Soviets handle the national aspirations of countries in their sphere of influence." On Israel: "I don't see anything wrong with it; why shouldn't the Jews have a state of their own? The Spaniards refuse to recognize it because they are, you know, *pro-Arab.*" ("Arab" pronounced like a horrible disease.) On Vietnam: "Here you have a case where spiritual forces can compensate entirely for the lack of material resources." (But then, "What the Vietnamese want is food. Why not give them that, and that will stop them.") On Che Guevara, killed less than two years before in Bolivia: "I am anti-Communist—I always have been. He was a Communist, but a great man . . . killed by your American Green Berets. It was a Bolivian matter. Why was the U.S. involved?" On the U.S. presidential campaign, then underway: "I wouldn't want to be President of the United States. Too many problems."

Toward the end of the meeting a visitor was announced, brought in by López Rega, whom I now met for the first time. It was Juan Atilio Bramuglia, whose deceased father, a former labor leader, had been Perón's most respected foreign minister. Indeed, the elder Bramuglia had done such a good job in the late 1940s burnishing the prestige of

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the Argentine government at the United Nations (then not a particularly friendly forum) as to arouse the jealous ire of Eva Perón, who contrived to get rid of him. The younger Bramuglia must have been a teenager when Perón was overthrown; whatever grudges the family might have harbored against Evita in the meantime had obviously not been transferred to her husband.

Bramuglia had just returned from a business trip to the Middle East, and he wished to have a few moments alone with Perón. López Rega gently guided me out of the room and out of the house. We took a slow promenade around the grounds, during which Perón's secretary regaled me with the story of his life. He had originally started out to be a poet, he said, but "they" (the Argentine literary establishment?) purposely ignored his work because of his political views. He had been with Perón twenty-five years, he said; it was amazing to watch the way old opponents were coming around to supporting him. ("I've seen some Argentine politicians come to this house, people who've been against him their entire lives, and leave with tears in their eyes.") Mentally I calculated that López Rega must have been in the Argentine military, perhaps an NCO? How else could he have been with Perón since 1943?

By this time we were rounding the bend and coming back to the house, and Perón and Bramuglia were standing on the veranda, with a woman I immediately recognized as the general's third wife, María Estela Martínez de Perón (or Isabelita, as she was later known). She was far less attractive than her photographs in the study, but it was a hot summer day and she had not bothered with makeup. I do not think we were even introduced. Since I knew her to be a former cabaret dancer who was barely literate, I harbored no great desire to meet her. Too bad for me: within six years she was to become Latin America's first woman chief of state.

Bramuglia offered to give me a ride back to downtown in a chauffeur-driven car that was waiting for him outside the gate. Perón accompanied us through the small access door, and as we waited for the car to pull into place I saw something that had entirely escaped my notice when I arrived. On a hillock looking down on the house, and controlling all the access routes, was a uniformed squad from the Civil Guard crouched around a machine gun mounted on a tripod. These precautions were probably gratuitous (during Perón's long stay in Spain there were never any security problems), but they had the desired dramatic effect, at least on me. The chauffeur rapidly dismounted to take the opportunity to shake the great man's hand.

Riding back to the center of Madrid, I reflected on the fact that Perón's ideological views remained firmly fixed in the inter-war pe-

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riod. Nothing that had happened since, including the political collapse of fascism in Italy or its military defeat in alliance with Nazi Germany had made much of an impression on him. Nor did he seem to see the relationship between fascism and the outbreak of World War II, which had left Soviet Communism—not "national socialism"—in control of much of the European continent. His confusion of Scandinavian social democracy and the populist-authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Syria made no sense to me, but it obviously served to appeal to the most diverse range of supporters in Argentina. After all, his country was something of a maverick among nations, half-European, half-Third World. But what would happen if he had to put these theories into practice?

VIII

The next time I saw Perón was on American television, returning to his country in 1972 at the invitation of a military regime that—having exhausted all other alternatives—finally chose national reconciliation through a political opening. The generals thought they could have it all ways, however: they rigged the rules so that Perón himself could not be a candidate in new elections. Perón remained unruffled. After a three-week stay he returned to Spain, from whence he designated that Héctor Cámpora, a dentist who had served briefly as President of the Chamber of Deputies during his first presidency, should stand in for him. In May 1973, Cámpora—a charming mediocrity—won 49 percent of the vote and was inaugurated for a six-year term.

In the event, Cámpora served less than six weeks. By mid-June, under orders from Perón, he and his vice president resigned to clear the way for new elections. This time there would be no proscriptions, and Perón could run on his own. This of course was an eventuality that surprised nobody. What *was* rather unexpected was the peculiarly "leftist" texture of Cámpora's brief presidency, since there was nothing about the man's political background to prepare one for it. All of a sudden the Interior Ministry—that is, the agency in charge of the judicial system and the police—as well as the state-controlled television network, were taken over by "revolutionary Peronists." One of Cámpora's first measures was to offer a blanket pardon to "political prisoners"—that is to say, to urban terrorists who over the past three or four years had been convicted for bank robberies, kidnapping of wealthy Argentines for ransom, and occasionally assassination of military men and conservative politicians. Perón himself was widely reported to be shocked by the disorder that overtook his country, al-

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though in fact he himself had done nothing whatever to restrain these youthful terrorists, since their activities did much to convince the generals that the price of remaining in power was becoming prohibitive.

Who were these people? Many of them were the Marxist-influenced students I had known in a more hesitant ideological guise during my stay in Argentina. After 1968 they moved more or less en masse into the Peronist youth movement ("to infiltrate Peronism from within") or into two different urban guerrilla movements, one of which was more or less loosely allied to it. For a few short weeks the gamble paid off. But then, all of a sudden, in Madrid Perón had shaken his finger and the whole structure collapsed. A provisional government was named to prepare the way for new elections in September. Perón himself returned for good in late June. The spectacle was too good to miss; I bought a round-trip ticket and prepared to spend six weeks in Argentina.

IX

"You will find things greatly changed here," a friend had written me before my arrival. That was quite literally the understatement of the decade. Peronism was not merely no longer proscribed; it was, in fact, the declared political preference of almost anyone who heeded the counsels of fashion—or prudence. The principal issue of the day was not whether Perón would be re-elected—all surveys showed him winning hands-down—but who his running mate would be. He was, after all, by then nearly eighty years old and probably would not survive the six-year term. What Peronism now was, and where it could be expected to go over the longer term, would therefore be defined largely by whom Perón selected to be his vice president. This question, I found, dominated all others in Argentine politics.

In my effort to elucidate matters, I started looking up old friends and acquaintances. Some decided not to return my calls, presumably because I was an American—a condition that, in the ideological delirium of the moment, apparently established that I was working for the CIA. (I was not.) But others simply expressed their regrets; they did not have the time, since they were spending their days and nights at meetings. The purpose of these, it appeared, was to force upon Perón one or another vice presidential candidate. This was particularly true of the Left, members of which, having done much to make Perón's return possible, believed that he owed it a massive political debt.

There was certainly no shortage of people willing to be Perón's running mate. They included a labor leader from the province of

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Córdoba, who brandished Marxist clichés like a lethal weapon, as well as an active-duty general who, until recently, figured among the most repressive of military authorities. It was obvious to me—though not always to my friends—that the second most important figure in the country was now Perón's former secretary, José López Rega, who now presided over the ministry of social welfare. As the agency in charge of handing out pensions to the elderly, this was a political powerhouse in its own right. But López Rega's reach extended somewhat further afield. He was rumored to have strong connections in the Argentine political underworld, which included groups that were later identified in the world press as right-wing "death squads." His son-in-law was serving as Provisional President, pending Perón's re-election several weeks hence. And he was so closely tied to Perón's wife politically that the gossips had it that the two were lovers.

From extensive journalistic coverage, I now learned more about the man with whom I had taken a brief morning stroll around Perón's villa some five years before. López Rega was a former policeman who had served on Perón's security detail during his presidency; he had returned to the general's immediate circle in the mid-sixties after having proved his usefulness to Madame Perón during an important visit she paid to Argentina as her husband's representative in 1964. There was nothing in the papers about his supposed early vocation as a poet, but much about his intense interest in astrology, and about how both the Peróns, but particularly Isabelita, were reputed to set great store in his "readings." When—to the surprise of many—Perón passed over more logical running mates to name his wife, there were many ways to interpret the decision, but none of them suggested that López Rega would play a minor role in the next administration, less so that it would be tilted toward the Left.

I would have liked to have discussed all of this with my old professor, the one who had made possible my meeting with Perón, but this proved very difficult. In the intervening years the poor man, and his wife, too, had succumbed to a form of schizophrenia that manifested itself in flights of irrationality and extreme delusions of grandeur. The walls of their apartment were covered by homemade "diplomas" naming him to such high posts as—I am not exaggerating—field marshal of the Chinese armies. During dinner the only topic of discussion was what Western European embassy Perón should give him after his imminent return to power. (Humoring them along—what else could I do?—I helped them finally decide upon Brussels.) Subsequently, both were committed to institutions, where each was to spend many long years. Their two children were turned over to her sister to be raised.

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As for Perón, he confined his campaign appearances to television, where he was interviewed by panels of friendly journalists. He had aged considerably since I had met him, and his pronouncements were banal in the extreme; they lacked even the idiosyncratic cutting edge that had so surprised me during our morning together in Madrid. The principal burden of his message was that the world was a hungry place and that countries like Argentina, which were in a position to supply it with foodstuffs, would have a disproportionate amount to say about things. Only the first half was true. Ahead lay two oil shocks that would greatly undermine the purchasing power of countries most in need of foodstuffs, and in other ways the Argentine economy was in less than optimal condition; those who could were already sending their liquid wealth out of the country.

A few days before I left to go back to the United States, one of the two urban guerrilla movements attacked an army post just outside of Buenos Aires, killing an officer and a conscript. The nation was profoundly shocked, but particularly so were those people who expected that with Perón's return to power now imminent, the country could at least put such episodes behind it. ("This is what these people wanted," a friend's mother, a lifelong anti-Peronist, bitterly remarked. "Why are they rebelling against it?") The answer, of course, was that as the moment of his return approached, Perón suddenly revealed his true colors—which were the very same shown to me in Madrid six years before. "Socialism," yes, but "national socialism"—which is to say, not socialism as understood by Marxists of any stripe. Perón had already begun to confront his own Left, which was now beginning to strike back.

I was luckier than most of my Argentine friends: I could watch the unfolding drama from a safe distance. It included Perón's re-election, his futile attempt to harness the forces he had unleashed to return to power; his sudden death a year later; his replacement by his widow; the growth of political violence on the Left and Right—and finally, in 1976, a coup that caused at least nine thousand people to be "disappeared." My old professor—immured in his schizophrenia and in a foreign embassy of his imaginings—might have been able to make sense of these events, but for the rest of us, fate seemed to make of Argentina nothing less than a great sad madhouse itself.

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How to Join the Middle Classes

With the Help of Dr. Smiles and Mrs. Beeton

CHRISTOPHER CLAUSEN

THE ASPIRATIONS OF AN AGE usually tell us more about its inner life than do its surviving achievements. Relatively few people contribute in any individual way to those products of a civilization that are lastingly apparent to succeeding generations. Art, architecture, literature, government, even commercial prominence are the achievements of a small minority in any population. The ideals and ambitions that animate that minority, however, may be much more widely shared, especially in an age when mass communications are highly developed and there are clear prospects of mobility within the social hierarchy.

The Victorian period in England was preeminently such an age. Enough Victorian people of all classes and conditions spoke of "character," "independence," and "respectability" as minimum goals to leave their twentieth-century descendants in no doubt as to the strength of these aspirations, while the words *lady* and *gentleman* took on connotations of moral admiration that they had never possessed before and have largely lost today. On the whole those ideals have not fared well in the twentieth century. Indeed, they have often come to be identified with hypocrisy and repression. Part of the problem may be that, unlike (let us say) the aspirations of Renaissance Florence, their products are mostly invisible. Respectability paints few masterpieces. Character may have helped to build the British Empire, but that empire lasted only a relatively short time and is now widely discredited.

Another reason for the ridicule often attached to Victorian aspirations is that they were so clearly identified with the middle classes.

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Never before or since has the middle rung of society enjoyed such prestige. As we shall see, some Victorian writers tried to detach these aspirations and their concomitant virtues from identification with any particular social class, but they never wholly succeeded. With the passage of time, it becomes difficult even to understand what the Victorians meant when they described someone as "respectable," or as the highest manifestation of this galaxy of virtues, a "gentleman." The great Victorian novels and poems are rarely much help here; either they take too much for granted in the reader's understanding, as Trollope does, or they create caricatures of smug self-righteousness that repel rather than illuminate. (How much damage has Dickens's Mr. Bounderby done to the reputation of Victorian self-improvement all by himself?) In neither case do they offer much enlightenment to future generations who wish to know how their ancestors conceived of improving themselves and how they might have gone about doing it.

Samuel Smiles and Isabella Beeton are each remembered as the author of one book—in each case a book that was popular enough to be frequently revised and remains in print today. Smiles's *Self-Help, With Illustrations of Character and Conduct* was first published in 1859, the year of Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Mill's *On Liberty*. Although it has frequently been an object of derision since the moment of its first publication, it sold hugely in many languages and is described by its most recent publishers, the Penguin Business Library, as a "Management Classic." Admiration for *Self-Help* spread far beyond Europe and America. According to Asa Briggs, the Khedive of Egypt proudly informed an English visitor that the mottoes on his palace walls were "principally from Smeelis. . . . They are much better than the texts from the Koran!" *Beeton's Book of Household Management* appeared two years after *Self-Help*, in 1861, and has been systematically revised and reissued ever since by the successors to the original publisher, who gradually turned it into what it is often mistakenly thought to have been from the beginning, a mere cookbook. "Mrs. Beeton" has, in fact, been for over a century the standard English cookbook, frequently outselling every other book but the Bible. Like *Self-Help*, it has often been ridiculed, both because of its familiarity and because of the grandiose scale of some of its recipes.

The similarity between the two authors and their books might seem to end there. Samuel Smiles was a Scottish physician, journalist, businessman, and prolific biographer of industrialists who himself lived to be ninety-two. Isabella Beeton (née Mayson), the daughter of a London businessman, married a publisher, wrote only on household subjects, and died of puerperal fever when she was twenty-eight. But appearance is deceptive. Dr. Smiles and Mrs. Beeton reflected

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better than anyone else, and for a larger audience, the optimistic message that mid-Victorian England was filled with opportunities for those who were willing to learn how to take advantage of them. In a rapidly expanding industrial society, moral primacy had shifted from the aristocracy to the urban middle class. The revolutionary Chartist movement and the "hungry forties" were distant memories by 1859, while the rise of politically significant working-class consciousness was far in the future. No new radical movement would achieve widespread popular support until nearly the end of the century. Moreover, the class system, while real and on the whole unquestioned, was widely seen as permeable at every level. No matter how humble one's origins or how limited one's education, he—or she—could not merely imitate gentlemen or ladies but actually belong to their number, provided one worked diligently to acquire middle-class values and habits. To do so required no special gifts of intelligence or ability but merely hard work and the right kind of instruction. That instruction was what both writers, like many less able predecessors since the eighteenth century, proposed to offer. As Mrs. Beeton's great-niece wrote in 1948, the early-Victorian reading public "was still comparatively small, but it was keen. The way was clear for ambition and self-help, even for the half-educated Englishman of whom Charles Dickens is the immortal epitome."

What that ever-growing public, both male and female, required to be taught was not merely a set of manners, but a quasi-moral role and a conception of responsibilities that went with it. Those responsibilities fell into two distinct spheres—men's and women's—but each was supremely worthy of being sought and occupied. Whether one was at the seeking or the occupying stage, character and discipline were far more important than fortunate birth. Self-education was in fact superior to conventional education by others because the motivation behind it was already a powerful force driving one forward. In order to be effectually self-educated, however, generalizations and exhortation were not enough. Men and women needed, each in their own sphere, books that would teach them in detail the complicated disciplines and duties required to gain and justify a respectable middle-class life: how to get there and how to avoid being an impostor when you had arrived. Thus Mrs. Beeton's book begins with a meticulously detailed chapter on the mistress of a middle-class household, while Smiles's ends by discussing the character of the true gentleman.

To dismiss this sort of thing as mere pandering to the illusions of would-be social climbers is to miss the almost missionary spirit that united both authors with at least some of the people who read their books. As the social historian Geoffrey Best points out,

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Historians will never conclusively settle the argument about "Victorian hypocrisy." Only purblind idolaters of some imagined Victorian ideal can blink the facts of its existence. But such idolaters are no more ignorant, wilfully or invincibly, than muck-raking critics of Victorian society who neglect to note that what may be called a kind of hypocrisy—the emulation of superior styles, the adoption of better manners, etc.—could, probably must, have had a refining and civilising influence in a hierarchical but mobile society, and that the motives for it need not always have been base.

The desire to work one's way out of poverty and ignorance does not in itself seem a heinous motive for mastering the contents of a book written by someone in a position to offer helpful advice. Nor is there anything superficial about the disciplines prescribed by either author. Neither book suggests that you can pray your way to wealth, or that dressing for success will make you respectable in any significant sense. Wealth itself is not even treated as a goal worth pursuing.

To write a book telling working-class people that they merit the respect of others, should respect themselves, and can improve their lives through individual effort may be objectionable from the point of view of the revolutionary who wishes instead to abolish economic and social inequality at a stroke, but there is nothing inherently hypocritical or patronizing about it. It argues a belief in the equal endowment of worth and talents among all social classes. Dignity is available to all who will learn to seek it properly. Enough mid-Victorians did in fact rise through such disciplines to validate similar ambitions for their contemporaries. A favorite maxim of Smiles's is that what one man has done, others can do. As for Mrs. Beeton, after describing in detail the "onerous duties" of the mistress of a middle-class house, she assures her reader that those duties

are, happily, with a slight but continued attention, of by no means difficult performance. She ought always to remember that she is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega in the government of her establishment; and that it is by her conduct that its whole internal policy is regulated. She is therefore a person of far more importance in a community than she usually thinks she is.

If we find such reassurances laughable or contemptible, the reason may be, not that we are not Victorians, but that we are securely middle-class people.

What exactly were those habits and duties that required so much discipline, but that anyone might learn and practice? How was one to go about developing one's character so that one's life reflected not merely respectability and independence, but (in Best's words) the "superior styles" and "better manners" of the fully arrived lady or gentleman? It is time for a closer look at the books themselves. I shall

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start with *Self-Help*, not only because of its chronological priority but because it is axiomatic that in order for a Victorian lady to be the mistress of a middle-class household, she must first (unless she is lucky enough to be an heiress) have a middle-class husband.

In 1845, on the brink of abandoning medicine and radical journalism for a career in the new railway industry, Samuel Smiles gave an address before a group of young workingmen in Leeds. It seems to have been a series of anecdotes organized around the theme of improving one's life through one's own efforts. Near the end of it, Smiles anticipated a criticism that was to bedevil his reputation throughout his life and ever since:

> I would not have anyone here think that, because I have mentioned individuals who have raised themselves by self-education from poverty to social eminence and even wealth, these are the chief marks to be aimed at. That would be a great fallacy. *Knowledge* is of itself one of the highest enjoyments.

The address was enlarged and published as a pamphlet entitled *The Education of the Working Classes,* then further enlarged and re-entitled *Self-Help.* At least one publisher rejected it before John Murray finally brought it out in 1859. In the enlarged version the same disclaimer was repeated many times in a variety of forms. Yet Smiles's reputation is largely that of a philistine booster who taught his readers how to accumulate capital and become Bounderbys. The writer to whom he is most often compared is Horatio Alger. How did Smiles come to be so misunderstood?

Part of his immediate problem may have had to do with his social egalitarianism. For some Victorian commentators, anyone who encouraged the lower classes to improve their lot was, ipso facto, preaching materialism and the leveling of all distinctions. To speak of either the middle or the working class in the singular greatly oversimplifies the many distinctions of status and function within each. Nonetheless, the boundary between all of the various working classes and all the middle classes, though hard to define, was easier to recognize; and it is this barrier that Smiles unmistakably prepares his readers to cross. Then, too, there was the title of the book, which Smiles had come to regret as early as 1866, "as it has led some, who have judged it merely by the title, to suppose that it consists of a eulogy of selfishness: the very opposite of what it really is," he ineffectually complained. Much of the derision heaped on *Self-Help* by sophisticated readers probably derives from the same cause as its enormous popularity with the audience for which it was intended: the manner of its construction. Smiles's notion of literary composition was to take the

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basic concept of self-help, subdivide it haphazardly into thirteen chapters, and eke out each chapter with anecdotes or biographical sketches of well-known people who had risen from humble origins to some variety of success.

As a writer, Smiles resembled nothing so much as a vacuum cleaner that rolled from room to room of a large dusty house filling up its bag. Between the first chapter, which introduces the subject, and the last, which concludes it, there is no obvious principle of organization, no progression from one point to another. "Workers in Art" could just as well come after "Industry and the Peerage" as before; "Money: Its Use and Abuse" could perfectly well be the third chapter instead of the tenth. There is an accidental quality about the whole edifice, a defect that Smiles apologetically attributed in the 1866 edition to "the manner in which it was for the most part originally composed,—having been put together principally from jottings made during many years,—intended as readings for young men, and without any view to publication." The book's meandering anecdotal structure undoubtedly annoyed readers who were used to more logical organization. It also buried the concluding chapter, which lost the impact it should have had.

Worst of all, the use of endless biographical tidbits to illustrate and inspire placed an inevitable emphasis on worldly success, since in order for real people to become the subjects of these accounts they had to be reasonably well known. Not all of Smiles's examples were rich or powerful men. Some were artists, educators, even religious figures. But by far the greatest number were inventors or entrepreneurs (many of them Scots) of the Industrial Revolution, and their collective weight had the effect of offsetting Smiles's caveats about the pursuit of wealth for its own sake. In his chapter on money, he declared bluntly:

> Nothing is more common than energy in money-making, quite independent of any higher object than its accumulation. A man who devotes himself to this pursuit, body and soul, can scarcely fail to become rich. Very little brains will do; spend less than you earn; add guinea to guinea; scrape and save; and the pile of gold will gradually rise.

The passage drips with contempt. Yet the distinction that Smiles draws between pursuing wealth for its own sake (bad) and working diligently "for our own comfort and independence in old age" (good) is a dangerously subtle one for such a writer to convey to such an audience.

In her biography of her grandfather, Aileen Smiles describes the

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narrow Calvinist environment in which he grew up, while the historian Asa Briggs emphasizes Smiles's debt to Thomas Carlyle, another son of the Kirk. Yet it is far too easy to read the influence of Calvin into any Victorian writer, and Carlyle would have had little use for Smiles's social egalitarianism. A belief in hard work is too widespread to be automatically attributed to either of these influences. If the religious doctrines of his Covenanter ancestors had any direct influence on *Self-Help*, it was probably by way of reaction to them. The most optimistic and comforting feature of the book is its assertion that no one is predestined to poverty, misfortune, or dependence. Human will is both efficacious and capable of good. The context for these assertions is social rather than religious, but for an extroverted thinker like Smiles the distinction is almost meaningless. The very title of his book would strike orthodox Calvinists as heretical. Its emphases, moreover, are more often socially radical than conservative, even though Smiles rarely draws any political conclusions:

> Great men of science, literature, and art—apostles of great thoughts and lords of the great heart—have belonged to no exclusive class nor rank in life. They have come alike from colleges, workshops, and farmhouses,—from the huts of poor men and the mansions of the rich. Some of God's greatest apostles have come from "the ranks." The poorest have sometimes taken the highest places; nor have difficulties apparently the most insuperable proved obstacles in their way.

Claims like these may strike late-twentieth-century readers as platitudes, but Smiles's original audience would not have taken them nearly so much for granted. The egalitarian individualism preached throughout the book is made to seem more practical than ever when Smiles belittles the importance of distinctions not only in social origins but in education and even intelligence. The "self-culture" that he advocates is "a kind of education not to be learnt from books, or acquired by any amount of mere literary training." ("One good mother," he wrote elsewhere, "is worth a hundred schoolmasters.") These reassurances draw some of their force from the reality that many working-class parents could not afford even elementary schooling for their children until it became mandatory after 1870. "It matters not though a youth be slow, if he be but diligent. Quickness of parts may even prove a defect." Every involuntary circumstance that might hold one back is explored and found to be insignificant. One's own efforts are the decisive factor in achieving, not necessarily wealth or fame, but self-respect, respectability, independence, and—the apex of Smiles's system—the character of a gentleman. These are the things worth having. Anyone may have them who, informed and in-

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spired by the exemplary lives Smiles recounts, will practice hard work, honesty, persistence, frugality, and thoughtfulness toward others.

"Self-respect," Smiles declares near the end of the book, "is the noblest garment with which a man may clothe himself—the most elevated feeling with which the mind can be inspired." All other virtues derive from it. In order to respect himself, a man must work to free himself from dependence on vices that hold him back in life; drinking and gambling are often mentioned. He must also free himself from the belief that poverty or low social rank means low deserts. He must, in short, see himself as an individual, which in effect means turning away from the communal habits of the working class toward the less collective, home-centered life of the middle class. As Smiles never tires of repeating, "What some men are, all without difficulty might be"—a generalization that inspires precisely because of its excessive optimism. Once again, however, he warns that wealth and power are neither the highest goals nor the probable results of such individual discipline. "One way in which self-culture may be degraded is by regarding it too exclusively as a means of 'getting on.' . . . The great majority of men, in all times, however enlightened, must necessarily be engaged in the ordinary avocations of industry." Self-respect and the respect of others make success in the world much more likely, but they are above all to be practiced for their own sake.

Smiles was well aware that hypocrisy is the tribute paid by vice to virtue, particularly when the virtue in question is widely advocated, and he bestows some of his most eloquent contempt on popular counterfeits of gentility and respectability.

> Middle-class people are apt to live up to their incomes, if not beyond them: affecting a degree of "style" which is most unhealthy in its effects upon society at large. There is an ambition to bring up boys as gentlemen, or rather "genteel" men; though the result frequently is only to make them gents. . . . We keep up appearances, too often at the expense of honesty; and, though we may not be rich, yet we must seem to be so.

True respectability means moral worth, not conformity to a narrow code, and still less the display of affluence.

> The respectable man is one worthy of regard, literally worth turning to look at. But the respectability that consists in merely keeping up appearances is not worth looking at in any sense. . . . A well balanced and well stored mind, a life full of useful purpose, whatever the position occupied in it may be, is of far greater importance than average worldly respectability. The highest object of life we take to be to form a manly character, and to work out the best development possible, of body and spirit—of mind, conscience, heart, and soul. This is the end: all else ought to be regarded but as the means.

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The pursuit of a manly character was not the same thing as the pursuit of affluence, but it had its worldly side nonetheless. It required independence. The worst feature of poverty was that it made its victims subject to the will of others—either to the rich who gave alms or to the parish commissioners who administered the poor law. The man who could not support himself had no freedom and therefore no scope for self-development; he was "in constant peril of falling under the bondage of others, and accepting the terms which they dictate to him." Such a man was inevitably servile. The independent man, no matter how modest his income, was at least free to develop himself. Independence meant, quite simply, making more than one spent. The way to achieve it was by saving. Once one had become independent, all roads to advancement were open.

Smiles's claims about the ease with which average manual workers (who constituted more than three-quarters of the adult male population) could achieve independence are apt to strike modern readers as the least plausible element in *Self-Help.* We know that there was a surplus of labor throughout most of the mid-Victorian period, and that the difference between independence and unemployment might depend on something so unpredictable as a bad wheat harvest in America. Smiles is adamant, however, that independence is within the reach of most men, and that it constitutes the one reliable stay against unemployment or old age. "To secure independence, the practice of simple economy is all that is necessary. Economy requires neither superior courage nor eminent virtue; it is satisfied with ordinary energy, and the capacity of average minds."

Perhaps Smiles's insistent tone here has something to do with the fact that he is now talking about national as well as individual independence. As an economic thinker allied in certain respects to the Utilitarians, he considers saving—"the power of resisting present gratification for the purpose of securing a future good"—to be vital for the future of the British economy. The further development of industry, which is the chief source of mobility and opportunity, requires investment. Investment requires saving. What is good for an individual, then, is also good for his country. We must not forget that the first chapter of the book is entitled "Self-Help: National and Individual." The nation that does not save, like the improvident worker, loses a measure of its independence, and therefore of its liberty—a point not without relevance at the end of the twentieth century.

Smiles approvingly quotes another well-known writer of 1859, John Stuart Mill, on the vital connection between individual character and liberty. Then Smiles expresses his skepticism toward authoritarian

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solutions to the social problems attendant on industrialism: "Old fallacies as to human progress are constantly turning up. Some call for Caesars, others for Nationalities, and others for Acts of Parliament. . . . A far healthier doctrine to inculcate among the nations would be that of Self-Help; and so soon as it is thoroughly understood and carried into action, Caesarism will be no more." (Smiles did support public-health measures and public education, and he denounced extreme laissez-faire in terms reminiscent of Dickens's Stephen Blackpool.) As individual liberty can be maintained only through self-help, so with national liberty. In both cases, the first step is economy, the sacrifice of present pleasure for future independence. Or to put it another way, frugality is the root and liberty the flower.

To understand the fruits of liberty as Smiles conceives them, one must turn from the first chapter of *Self-Help* to the last, which is entitled "Character: The True Gentleman." As one would expect by now, "Riches and rank have no necessary connexion with genuine gentlemanly qualities. The poor man may be a true gentleman." That the gentleman is hardworking, frugal, honest, and independent—economically useful qualities all—goes without saying. But these are not his highest virtues. Even "integrity in word and deed," though "the backbone of character," is not the final goal. By the last pages of *Self-Help*, all of these are means to a higher end.

> There are many tests by which a gentleman may be known; but there is one that never fails—How does he *exercise power* over those subordinate to him? How does he conduct himself towards women and children? . . . The discretion, forbearance, and kindliness with which power in such cases is used may indeed be regarded as the crucial test of gentlemanly character. . . . Gentleness is indeed the best test of gentlemanliness.

The long historical redefinition of the word *gentleman* as a term reflecting moral virtues rather than birth into the class of armigers is now complete.

If honesty, frugality, perseverance, and, above all, gentleness are the marks of a true gentleman, then what about the wife who is to rule his home, the stronghold of middle-class values? What are her defining marks, and how is she to conduct herself? No such questions seem ever to have crossed Smiles's mind. When Isabella Beeton set out in her early twenties to answer them, however, she drew the portrait of a lady animated by remarkably similar ideals. "Frugality and economy are home virtues, without which no household can prosper," she says on her second page, adding a few pages later: "In marketing, that the best articles are the cheapest, may be laid down as a rule." (In her

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thousands of recipes, she always states the cost of the ingredients.) Honesty and truthfulness go without saying for the most part, but are especially important to remember when writing a letter of reference for a servant: "In giving a character, it is scarcely necessary to say that the mistress should be guided by a sense of strict justice. It is not fair for one lady to recommend to another, a servant she would not keep herself." This somewhat hard-nosed advice does not obviate the necessity (moral and practical) to treat servants with thoughtfulness. After repeating the timeless complaint that nowadays good servants are impossible to find, she ridicules it and adds that

> there are few families of respectability, from the shopkeeper in the next street to the nobleman whose mansion dignifies the next square, which do not contain among their dependents attached and useful servants; and where these are absent altogether, there are good reasons for it. The sensible master and the kind mistress know, that if servants depend on them for their means of living, they in turn depend on their servants for very many of the comforts of life; and that, with a proper amount of care in choosing servants, and treating them like reasonable beings, and making slight excuses for the shortcomings of human nature, they will, save in some exceptional case, be tolerably well served, and, in most instances, surround themselves with attached domestics.

This commonsensical tone, uniting morality with practicality in a far more down-to-earth manner than Smiles's, pervades the 1,112 closely printed pages, containing 2,751 numbered paragraphs, that make up *Beeton's Book of Household Management.* Such, one supposes, will be the character of the effective mistress of a household—who is, let us not forget, "the Alpha and Omega," the absolute authority within her own sphere. The very first sentence of the book sets its tenor: "As with the commander of an army, or the leader of any enterprise, so it is with the mistress of a house." Mrs. Beeton does not think of herself as writing for namby-pambies, and unlike Smiles she does not belittle intelligence. There is work to be done, work every bit as difficult and important as the work of men, and no less deserving of the highest respect. ("The rank which a people occupy in the grand scale," she proclaims, "may be measured by their way of taking their meals, as well as by their way of treating their women.") Discipline, self-assurance, and determination are no less essential qualities for the management of a household than for that of a factory. So is organization, a quality in which she is manifestly Smiles's superior. Not for nothing did she coin the phrase, "A place for everything and everything in its place." Ultimately, though, she and Smiles agree on what virtue is most important of all: "Gentleness, not partial and temporary, but universal and regular, should pervade her conduct; for where such a spirit is habitually manifested, it not only delights

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her children, but makes her domestics attentive and respectful; her visitors are also pleased by it, and their happiness is increased."

The quantity of detailed instruction that *Household Management* offers on the subject of hiring and managing servants suggests that much of its intended audience had risen from social circumstances in which domestic help was uncommon. In this respect as in so many others, it is evident that Mrs. Beeton's ideal reader was the female counterpart of Smiles's. Nor was it necessarily the case that she and her husband had risen as far as late-twentieth-century readers may think. Some full-time domestic help was an almost universal feature of even lower-middle-class Victorian households. In 1861, nearly 15 percent of the employed population of England consisted of servants; close to 12 percent of the *entire* female population was in service. The rising number of servants throughout the nineteenth century paralleled the growing number of middle-class households.

How many servants a household had, and what kinds of servants, depended very much on its income. For the guidance of her readers, Mrs. Beeton provided a precisely graduated "scale of servants suited to various incomes" ranging from £150 a year (a figure putting one near the bottom of the middle class) to £1000 (the income of a prosperous London doctor, lawyer, or senior civil servant). At the lower reaches, one could afford a "maid-of-all-work (and girl occasionally)." A cook became affordable when one's income reached about £500 a year, a footboy at £750, and a man servant at £1000. Although the book describes the duties of butlers and housekeepers, its author clearly did not think that most of her intended readers could afford them. Like coachmen, nurses, and governesses (who are not even mentioned), these exalted servants were reserved to the genuinely wealthy, who would not in any case have needed a book to specify their duties, provide a scale of prevailing wages for each category, or explain in detail how to manage them.

Nor would one expect, if the book were intended for women born in the middle class, to find such injunctions as "Early rising is one of the most essential qualities which enter into good Household Management," or "Cleanliness is also indispensable to health, and must be studied both in regard to the person and the house, and all that it contains. Cold or tepid baths should be employed every morning." Mrs. Beeton takes nothing for granted. By and large the Victorian middle class rented rather than owned its houses; Mrs. Beeton gives lengthy instructions on what to look for and implies that the lady of the house was the one who usually chose it. She provides full directions on how to equip a kitchen, complete with the price of every implement. Two pages of instruction on the giving and receiving of

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calls are followed by directions that should enable the most inexperienced hostess to throw a successful dinner party, from the sending of invitations (samples are given for both invitation and acceptance) to the number of people one ought to invite, to the best ways of keeping one's guests entertained until the food is served, to proper behavior at the table ("It is not usual, where taking wine is *en règle*, for a gentleman to ask a lady to take wine until the fish or soup is finished"), right on through the dessert, the fruit, and the departure of the ladies from the dining room.

Mrs. Beeton regards dinners as one of the triumphs of civilization, and in addition to these step-by-step instructions, she devotes an enthusiastic chapter to their history and virtues, complete with quotations from Byron, Thackeray, Milton, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, and an ancient Greek historian whom she does not name. As a fitting end for this chapter, she offers a "Bill of fare for a picnic for 40 persons," which includes, among many other things, "a joint of cold roast beef, a joint of cold boiled beef, 2 ribs of lamb, 2 shoulders of lamb, 4 roast fowls, 2 roast ducks, 1 ham, 1 tongue, 2 veal-and-ham pies, 2 pigeon pies, 6 medium-sized lobsters, 1 piece of collared calf's head, 18 lettuces, 6 baskets of salad, 6 cucumbers." I shall pass over the breads, pastries, cheeses, desserts, and so forth; but no picnic is complete without drinks, and Mrs. Beeton was equal to the task: "3 dozen quart bottles of ale, packed in hampers; ginger-beer, soda-water, and lemonade, of each 2 dozen bottles; 6 bottles of sherry, 6 bottles of claret, champagne à discretion, and any other light wine that may be preferred, and 2 bottles of brandy. Water can usually be obtained so it is useless to take it."

Having managed a successful dinner party (indoors or out), our hostess, who may be assumed to be a quick study, will now turn her ambitions to giving a ball. As usual, each stage is described in detail:

> As the ladies and gentlemen arrive, each should be shown to a room exclusively provided for their reception. . . . As the visitors are announced by the servant, it is not necessary for the lady of the house to advance each time towards the door. . . . A separate room or convenient buffet should be appropriated for refreshments. . . . It will be well for the hostess, even if she be very partial to the amusement, and a graceful dancer, not to participate in it to any great extent, lest her lady guests should have occasion to complain of her monopoly of the gentlemen. . . . When the carriages of the guests are announced. . . .

And so it went, on and on, step by step, and page by page. With such a guide, failure is impossible. After Professor Higgins taught Eliza how to speak like a lady, she undoubtedly learned to do the work of one by reading Mrs. Beeton. The book even has a paragraph on the proper

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order of retiring for the night, ending with the prudent injunction that "no servants should, on any account, be allowed to remain up after the heads of the house have retired."

It goes without saying that a Victorian lady did not display her character only, or even primarily, in giving entertainments. There were also such serious matters as raising children—or, as Mrs. Beeton puts it, "The Rearing and Management of Children, and Diseases of Infancy and Childhood," on which she spends a lengthy chapter. Those diseases, as is well known, were matters of life and death to nineteenth-century parents. Like most Victorians, Mrs. Beeton had little conception of the backwardness of contemporary medicine, but she was well aware that in an emergency the doctor more often than not arrived too late. "Generally speaking," she declares unsentimentally, "the surgeon, on his arrival, finds that death has already seized its victim, who, had his friends but known a few rough rules for their guidance, might have been rescued." Although too polite to say so, she seems to regard men as hopelessly impractical creatures, useless in any kind of crisis.

With her usual dauntlessness, Mrs. Beeton redresses this situation by describing the symptoms, causes, and immediate remedies for every medical emergency from cholera and epilepsy to snakebite and drowning, complete with a list of all drugs required, modestly attributing her knowledge in these matters to "a gentleman of large professional experience." Ironically, considering the manner in which she was soon to die, she has nothing to say about pregnancy or diseases peculiar to women. But the limits of decorum in 1861 were not always narrower than today, particularly when it came to death or extreme means of avoiding that fate. The high point of this chapter is undoubtedly the section entitled "How to Bleed." ("Place a handkerchief or piece of tape rather but not too tightly round the arm, about three or four inches above the elbow. . . . The operator should take the lancet in his right hand, between the thumb and first finger, place the thumb of his left hand on the vein below the part where he is going to bleed from, and then . . . ") The possibility that curious children might practice this gruesome therapy on each other seems not to have occurred to her, the age of childproof lids and similar concepts being far in the future. But she does have the uncharacteristic trepidation to "caution the reader only to attempt it in cases of the greatest emergency."

The last chapter in *Household Management* is a compendium of information about household law. But the indefatigable author would not have considered that to be, in any profound sense, her last word to the reader whose ambitions she had tried to further in so many

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ways. It is easy to forget that for this extraordinary woman, as for Samuel Smiles, gentleness was the virtue that defined the gentleperson, the highest product of self-help. We have seen some of the forms that gentleness takes within the walls of a middle-class household. But there is also the world outside, and the most acceptable form of gentleness for a Victorian lady to assume toward that world was charity. Mrs. Beeton does not write of charity at length; her subject, after all, is household management. What she does say about it, however, perhaps defines her better than any other section of her book. "Charity and benevolence are duties which a mistress owes to herself as well as to her fellow-creatures," she begins somewhat stiffly; "and there is scarcely any income so small, but something may be spared from it, even if it be but 'the widow's mite.'" (Smiles had said, "Orderly men of moderate means have always something left in their pockets to help others.") She then quotes six lines of verse on the spirit of charity. So much might be pro forma; but another paragraph follows:

> Visiting the houses of the poor is the only practical way really to understand the actual state of each family; and although there may be difficulties in following out this plan in the metropolis and other large cities, yet in country towns and rural districts these objections do not obtain. Great advantages may result from visits paid to the poor; for there being, unfortunately, much ignorance, generally, amongst them with respect to all household knowledge, there will be opportunities for advising and instructing them, in a pleasant and unobtrusive manner, in cleanliness, industry, cookery, and good management.

There we see in its purest form the zeal and energy that impelled so young a woman to write so vast a book. Pleasant she must certainly have been. That she was unobtrusive seems a good deal less likely.

That same obtrusiveness, that relentless didacticism, may in fact be the most important reason that both her reputation and Samuel Smiles's went into decline. The implacable style in advice giving, like the earnestness that Oscar Wilde caricatured so successfully in the 1890s, was a mid-Victorian taste that soon dated. Its lack of subtlety, humor, and modesty made it an easy target for ridicule among the sophisticated, for whom it was never intended. Today we prefer our moral guides to be more diffident. Furthermore, sophisticated readers today are less likely to believe that poverty and ignorance can be cured by individual self-help, less optimistic about the capacity of even a relatively mobile society to better itself without massive government intervention. Where Dr. Smiles and Mrs. Beeton looked at a world in which most people were poor and saw boundless opportunities, we seem—in a much more affluent time—to notice only the

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intractability of our problems. The world they saw was, like all social worlds, a hierarchy; but they also believed that no one's lot need be unalterably determined by birth, and they devoted their efforts to helping the less fortunate take advantage of every chance for improvement.

Like the Renaissance *Book of the Courtier* or *Book of the Governor, Self-Help* and *Household Management* reveal some dominant aspirations of their age. The specific forms those aspirations take, the kinds of readers in a position to share them, and therefore the most appropriate rhetoric of instruction, are as subject to historical change as any other features of cultural life. But the ambition to improve one's standing and circumstances is present in all developed societies. In that sense, both books represent something permanent. If he were alive today, Samuel Smiles would run inspirational seminars for corporate managers. He would appear frequently on television, and cassettes of his speeches would be available in airport bookstores. Isabella Beeton, on the other hand, would be the president of an international hotel chain—or perhaps prime minister. Her own aspirations and opportunities would be different from what they were in the 1860s. They almost certainly never met; but it is pleasant to record that, in 1874, Dr. Smiles's son married Mrs. Beeton's half-sister.

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Tornado Alley

PHILIP PARADIS

Before the end of the world came
for him, Bo Sample dozed as he always did
every Sunday behind the wheel
of his oversized pickup outside
the Baptist church. Across the street
Jed Bowlin, with his jug, lay propped
against one of the brick walls
of the high school before wild trumpets
announcing destruction woke him
from his blurred dream.

Inside the church, no one was giggling
anymore at the Davis boys' coonhound
howling from their pickup in his cracked treble.
All singing stopped when a voice
like a runaway freight train's commanded
the walls to shake, shingles to fly off
and follow, and the church, too, to fall
to its knees. Then everyone knew
the dog was not joining in
with the singing congregation
but tuning to a note higher than G.

When the twister struck, what Jed Bowlin saw
sobered him: trees flying, the ball park's
chain-link fence uprooted like a weed,
crazy flocks of shingles, and one yellow
dandelion at his feet.

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Later, though all the lines were down, word
began to reach us, how some men had to pry
Bo's broken body from his mangled truck,
how Clara Hammond's newborn flew out of her arms
when the roof blew off, how she stared
into the screaming funnel, how she came to
when they found her baby, cooing and unharmed,
still blanket-wrapped in an uncut patch of timothy,
and how Jed Bowlin, who saw it all, threw down
his bottle and was born again.

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This Way Out

EMILY EXNER CHI

If Nature were a woman she'd be the kind
Whose hairpins are forever falling out—
Truth is, the ways of Nature are untidy:
Three hundred sixty-five is not exactly
The number of days Earth needs to do an orbit,
Nor twenty-eight precisely what the moon
Requires to wax and wane. And then there's pi,
Which will always be just an approximation,
And Planck's constant that things must be multiplied by
To make them come out right. The more you strive
To pin down Nature, the more she slips from under.

But we humans: we like to measure things,
We want to make them fit. Who says the earth
Has three hundred sixty degrees of longitude
And one hundred eighty degrees of latitude?
We do. It's we who draw lines on the globe,
Who decree that a day has twenty-four hours
And a week has seven days, and the number ten,
The sum of our fingers, is what we use for counting
Instead of twelve, which would be logical,
Or two, which is the way computers count.

How did we get so out of sync with Nature?
Was it from learning how to count on our fingers,
So that, fascinated with our cleverness,

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We set ourselves apart and stood aloof
From all the things we saw that we could count,
Till imperceptibly we found ourselves
On the outside, looking in, our busy brains
A barrier raised between us and creation?

What to do? And is there any way out?
Thinking about it isn't any solution:
Thinking's the problem. You might as well try
To get rid of a stray cat by giving it milk.
You can cry to the gods for help, but I think the gods
Are laughing somewhere, savoring their revenge
On the upstarts who have presumed to measure creation.

For me I'll shut my eyes and say OM . . .
For me I'll empty my mind and say OM!

✪ EMILY EXNER CHI's poetry has appeared in the *Kansas Quarterly*, the *Eastern Arts Journal*, and *The Crucible*.

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TEACHING

Remembering Allan Bloom

CLIFFORD ORWIN

Allan Bloom was born in Indianapolis in 1930. He studied at Chicago and at Paris and Heidelberg, and taught at many places, notably in Chicago's Basic Program in the 1950s, at Cornell in the 1960s, at Toronto in the 1970s, and at Chicago again from 1979 until his death this past October 7. I knew him as an undergraduate at Cornell from 1964 to 1968, as his colleague at Toronto from 1973 to 1979, again as his colleague at Chicago in the last year of his life, and as a frequent visitor in the years in between.

It was as a teacher that my friends and I first encountered "Mr. Bloom." The classroom was at the center of his life, and with him in it, it quickly moved to the center of ours.

As a teacher Allan hit the ground running, enjoying his greatest successes at the outset. In just one semester at Cornell in 1962, he inspired two brilliant students to transfer to Yale, where he was to spend the following year. When he returned to Ithaca, so did they. In the one year at Yale, teaching in Directed Studies where the best undergraduates were to be found, he inspired two of these students to transfer to Cornell immediately, and another four to resolve to attend graduate school there. These decisions to transfer were made within weeks of the students' first meetings with Allan.

Long before the public knew of Allan, he dominated the lives of those who did. I often thought of him as America's greatest unknown celebrity. On arriving at Cornell in 1964, I found my residence hall, a designated hatchery for intellectuals, wholly polarized around the subject of Allan Bloom. He had lived there the year before, and everyone either loved or hated him. The two parties therefore fell to warring for the souls of us freshmen. The Bloom question raged unabated inside the residence and on the campus generally for my entire four years at Cornell. It also raged within many of us, who were both attracted and repelled, amazed and disturbed, entranced and horrified by Allan and his mind-shaking arguments. One night my closest friend and I, fearing for our spiritual independence, resolved to flee Ithaca; then we decided that we owed it to ourselves to stay to fight it out; then we just laughed.

For us Allan Bloom was the foremost issue of the sixties, with which all the others were hopelessly entangled. Later, at Harvard graduate school, a leader of the New Left warned me that, come the revolution, students of Allan would be shot first. He was not alone; a great many people were obsessed with Allan. He remained throughout his life the consuming topic of discussion whenever his acquaintances gathered.

Allan's presence as a teacher was astonishing. Throughout his career he attracted large crowds. Even so he was never quite at ease in the lecture hall. His gestures were ungainly and he stuttered; if nervous energy was radioactive, his casualties would have dwarfed Chernobyl. Still, to watch him lecture was something. His dark eyes flashed over his aquiline nose as his face clearly registered his shifting moods. A frown of intensity was his basic expression, ceding to delight or concern at some sally by a student, then to pleasure as he savored a new formulation or to annoyance if he felt that the right words had eluded him. Often he would seem lost in his own musings. His powerful voice would fade to little more than a whisper, as all in the room strained to hear. Then the voice would boom again, and he would proceed with renewed confidence. All the while he filled the air with smoke rings. (Indiffer-

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ence to No Smoking signs was his characteristic form of lawlessness.) Juggling two cigarettes (the last and the next) while meditating on the profundities of life, Allan occasionally lifted the lighted end of one toward his unsuspecting lips. (He usually drew back in time.)

I have never known another teacher capable of so transporting an audience. In Allan's classroom, time stopped, and one felt oneself wafted to a higher plane of life and thought; to return to the outside world was always slightly depressing. He had the gift of making us feel that study was something exalted, one of the rarest human privileges, for the opportunity of which we should never cease to be thankful. (And for which therefore we should never cease blessing liberal democracy.) Other teachers could say as much, and have, but Allan made us *feel* it, in a matter in which only feeling is believing. Through knowing him it suddenly became credible that a life devoted to studying a couple of dozen mostly old books was one of surpassing nobility and joyfulness; in him we actually saw this life before us, and, however fleetingly, joined in it.

Allan's method was very simple. He proceeded slowly through books like the *Prince*, the *Republic*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Madame Bovary*, and *Democracy in America*, spending an entire course year on just four or five of these. He went through them from beginning to end, reading each in its entirety. He wanted us not just to learn the author's official position on this or that issue, but to grasp each work as a rich and integrated whole that addressed the entire human situation.

Allan aspired to demonstrate that these old books still spoke to us, indeed that they spoke with greater power than the clamoring voices of our own day. He would therefore mix detailed textual analysis with discussion of current issues. As he saw it, to explicate a text was to make it speak, which he could do only by establishing that it had anticipated the questions that mattered most to us today—which upon examination always proved variants of age-old human problems. The drama of his classes was that of confronting oneself in a book that had at first seemed impossibly old and "academic." He imparted that most vivid and profound of all lessons in our common humanity, the recognition that Plato really was speaking *to us*, that he had thought more deeply about the problems that most gripped us than we had ever been going to think about them ourselves. Allan did not just make old texts speak; he made them sing. As his friend Werner Dannhauser put it at his funeral, he was a pied piper of philosophy.

Nor did Allan slight the great alternatives to philosophy, even if these, too, had largely receded from modern view. He movingly re-created the life of piety, that of the great statesman or soldier, that of simple patriotism, that of the gentleman, that of devotion to the family. In his great scheme of things, each of these finally ceded to philosophy, but not before he had restored it to such dignity that you appreciated it as never before. He saw that philosophy as a way of life could only emerge in contradistinction to the full panoply of other human possibilities and that, estranged as we were from the primary phenomena, it fell to him to begin by painting the background. In this he made excellent use of the Bible, Shakespeare, and the novel and always felt that his teaching suffered from students' progressive unfamiliarity with these.

Allan was a live wire, throwing off spark after spark. He thrived on objections, which was fortunate, as he provoked so many of them. Often these were hostile or inarticulate; he didn't mind. He treated every objection as a question and made a genuine effort to satisfy it. Occasionally, he turned the objection to laughter but would then proceed to try to deal with it. He distrusted students who agreed with him too readily, admired those who put up a fight.

With everyone's opinions always on the line, the tension in the classroom would have been unbearable were it not for Allan's wit. This was spontaneous and amazingly quick; most of its flashes were at his own expense. Allan evoked not chuckles or titters but waves of tumultuous laughter, again and again, lecture after lecture. Students who knew nothing else about him would enroll in his course simply because of the hilarity that flooded from it. It was hard to hate someone who made you laugh as he did.

Allan loved teaching, and no hardship could deter him from it. Once in Toronto he arrived in class with his face all distorted; up all night with a toothache, he had just been to the dentist for removal of the abscessed tooth, rejecting any anaesthetic lest numbness cramp his style as a speaker. The show went on, as it al-

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ways did, and he reserved some of his most powerful performances for situations of adversity. In 1974 the Toronto campus was convulsed because some New Leftists had physically prevented a distinguished visitor from speaking. This time Allan was both sleepless and furious, intending to devote part of his lecture on Plato to an angry statement. Our colleague Walter Berns and I deterred him, lest he go off half-cocked. Allan refrained from mentioning the incident. Instead, in fielding a question about the dramatic character of the *Republic*, he spoke more movingly than ever about the rarity of the kind of discussion reported therein. He talked of how in times of darkness and crisis for Athens, a few people had gathered to consider the timeless issues of politics, of how the trial of Socrates cast its long shadow over the conversation, and of how we must cherish and defend the opportunities for such discussions that the university afforded us today. Having made his point, he proceeded as usual.

Allan later came to be called a conservative, a term that the *New York Times* obituary repeated like the mantra that it had become. Conservative, however, does not begin to capture his quality or his appeal. Since the climate of opinion on the better American campuses was leftish throughout his career, and since he questioned conventional wisdom relentlessly, "liberals" and leftists fumed about his influence with students. In fact conservative students rarely found him attractive; there was too much Voltaire in him. He was every bit as hard on "conservatism" as on "liberalism." All of his best students began on the Left, even if few remained there. Allan flushed out students from every thicket of current opinion: his target was lazy thinking and especially ideological thinking.

The least fair of all the accusations later leveled against Allan was that he was an ideologue. Like all of us, he harbored inclinations in that direction, inclinations all the more powerful in a man of such incandescent passion. He could be irascible and hasty, and he could oversimplify complex issues. Unlike most of us, however, he was wholly conscious of these inclinations and battled them constantly. He regarded the use of teaching to advance a partisan viewpoint as disgraceful, especially if one was teaching the works of great poets and philosophers.

Today we are admonished that to teach great books (books that the teacher asserts to be greater than most others, including almost all recent ones) is itself an ideological exercise. Allan turned to these books precisely to escape from ideology. He never offered a dogmatic teaching; he presented philosophy as that way of life for which the problems were always more evident than the solutions. He wanted to help students achieve a broader perspective on their own problems than was available in their own society, to survey themselves and it from the heights afforded by the works of the greatest thinkers. He stressed that these thinkers were neither Democrats nor Republicans; he noted for instance that Plato and Aristotle, while neither "socialists" nor "capitalists," were closer to the former than the latter. His aim was never to bring the cavalry of political philosophy to the rescue of any partisan position; it was to disclose the difficulties of those positions, thereby freeing the students from them.

Allan insisted that the books that he taught could speak to everyone, male and female, white and black, of Western background and of non-Western. Besides insisting on this, he proved it. In his last years, as North American universities became more polyglot, he drew many devoted students from non-Western backgrounds. His graduate students always included women, and he attracted some outstanding blacks. Allan was an "elitist" in believing that some books were much more worth reading than others, but he also believed that every student should read them. He opposed racial self-segregation because it discouraged blacks from reading them. He regarded some books as worth more than others precisely because they spoke to absolutely anybody who would take the trouble to listen to them.

As a graduate teacher, Allan ran an imposing seminar. He did most of the talking but evoked a lively response just the same. His sessions were famous for starting punctually and never ending that way. The scheduled two hours easily ran to four. In 1965 the great East Coast Power Blackout struck Ithaca and Allan's seminar, plunging the classroom into blackness. Perhaps Allan thought it his civic duty to deny us the opportunity of looting; in any case, he talked on and on. (I can no longer recall whether the blackout outlasted the seminar or vice versa.) In the seminar Allan could

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be peremptory, but often he would airily dismiss a question and return the following week to answer it at respectful length, having obviously mulled it over in the meantime.

Allan's advice to his graduate students was to find one great writer and stick with him. He himself focused on just four in the course of his life: Plato, Shakespeare, Rousseau, and Nietzsche. He believed that the key to learning was to live for a lifetime with the few great texts that most engaged you, to return to them again and again, and to grow as a thinker and human being along with your comprehension of them. If his students have anything in common, it is that they have honored this advice and immersed themselves in texts as diverse as their characters, ranging from the Bible to Heidegger.

Allan was equally a teacher outside the classroom. A visit to his apartment was a cherished if daunting experience. For his closest students he created an entire milieu. His favorite device was the reading group, an informal class held at his home. He also spent hours with these students individually, discussing the world, their work, their friendships and loves. Like most teachers, he overestimated his students; but unlike most, not by much. He was a super-hero not least in possessing X-ray vision. He could be tactful and he could be frank. He understood in each case what could not be said to someone's face and what could only be said to his face. Still, after a session listening to Allan dissect my friends, I could hardly escape the conclusion that he also dissected me before them. At least that spared me the necessity of trying to conceal much from them. Allan's gossip of this sort was rarely malicious. He believed that all learning was personal, that you learned only by coming to grips with your own character and those of your friends, the cases of human nature that mattered to you.

Especially in his informal relations with students, Allan appointed himself a kind of ambassador of the past. He loved, in the first place, the America of his youth, that vanished world of FDR and Truman, of a Democratic party that had Americanized the immigrants, confronted the Great Depression, spearheaded the defeat of Hitler, and kept the Soviets at bay. This he regarded as the heroic age of modern American politics, and his sentimental identification with the Democrats persisted, even as he found it ever harder to vote for Democratic candidates. (In his last years he delighted in following the ins and outs of Chicago politics.) At Cornell he befriended the octogenarian Frances E. Perkins, delegate to the Bull Moose convention of 1912, pioneer social reformer, and FDR's secretary of labor. He accorded Madam Perkins (as she was always called) the rare honor of confining himself to playing her straight man, eliciting arch social commentary and anecdote after anecdote about Al Smith, Jim Farley, John Nance Garner, Harold Ickes, and the rest. These he repeated for the rest of his life.

Equally privileged were such last masters of the great tradition of Western thought as happened to come to town. Allan loved being host to a Gershom Scholem or a Hans-Georg Gadamer, treating him with filial reverence and doing his best to communicate the grounds of that reverence to his students.

Conversations with Allan were as full of laughter as his lectures. He was a wonderful raconteur because he had so many stories to tell on himself. He was someone to whom things just happened. A famous gloss on two Yiddish terms for haplessness identifies one as the man who spills his soup and the other as the man whom it gets spilled on. Allan was a 32nd degree adept of both categories; he spilled oceans of soup on himself.

One of his favorite stories involved a lecturing trip to New York during his Toronto years. His friend Walter Berns had entrusted him with a credit-card payment to mail inside the States. Allan was staying at the Plaza, and he realized only after he was in bed that he had forgotten to mail the letter. A dim sense of the urgency of this missive afflicted him, and so, after hours of insomnia, he got up and went to look for a mailbox. So groggy was he, however, that when he got outside his room, he discovered that he had forgotten the letter. He also noticed that he was less than half-dressed, that he had closed his door behind him, and that he didn't have his key. (As my wife has often said of me, things hated him.) After other misadventures, he finally regained his room, his clothing, and the letter, and stumbled down to the lobby to mail it. No sooner had he accomplished this demanding task, however, than a new doubt seized him. Had the letter been stamped with American postage? He wasn't absolutely sure. If not, the post office would

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not deliver it, and Walter Berns might be seriously embarrassed. Allan now resolved to retrieve the letter. Since the desk clerk was vague about when the box would be emptied, the sleepless Allan camped out beside it for the remaining early morning hours. When the postman finally arrived, an actual tussle ensued. "Get your hands out of there! That's property of the U.S. government!" Allan finally got the letter back. It was correctly stamped. As he later learned from Berns, the payment was for $1.17.

This couldn't have happened to many people, but it was easy to believe that it had happened to Allan. He loved to tell of his early experiences in France, such as when a prostitute solicited him and, informed that he was only a "pauvre étudiant," replied "Mais j'adore la théorie!" (words that Allan later delighted in applying to himself). Then there was the time he was in a café with a group including a worldly older woman. Her cigarette went out, and Allan sprang to be helpful. "Madame, permettez-moi de rallumer votre feu!" She (with a withering glance): "J'en doute, monsieur, j'en doute."

Another favorite French story involved of all things *la Sainte Toile,* France's most sacred relic, the reputed wedding veil of the Virgin. At dusk one winter day in the early fifties, Allan found himself almost alone in the Cathedral of Chartres. A priest approached to ask his help with an urgent task. It proved to be that of transporting the reliquary of the veil from one place in the church to another. As they lugged it reverently, the priest inquired, "Est-ce que vous êtes catholique, mon fils?" "Non, mon père," replied Allan politely. An awkward pause ensued. "Alors est-ce que vous etes protestant?" "Non, mon père." Thereafter they proceeded in silence.

Paris was the next thing to heaven for Allan. He cherished the freedom that reigned there, the remarkable individuals, the range of human types, the intellectual intensity, the café society. He never felt pressure there, as he sometimes did in America, to conform to prevailing opinions. He hobnobbed with Rothschilds, with Communists who declared that someone should blow up the Louvre, with the philosopher Alexandre Kojève, with the eminent liberal Raymond Aron, with publishers, writers, artists, politicians, academics, and *flâneurs.* He influenced younger scholars emerging from Marxism, some few of whom almost comprise a French contingent of his students. Over the years he made several close friends, and ten days in Paris comprised the happiest interlude of his final months. If there are to be Allan sightings, a likely venue is the Café de Flore.

Allan's French sojourns pervaded his teaching and were the chief means by which he sought to open his students' eyes to the existence of a world beyond America. For him France and America were the two poles not only of his own life but of Western modernity. This emerged especially in his teaching of Tocqueville. He loved to contrast the callow but touching innocence of our society with the worldliness and cynicism of theirs, the American suburban bungalow with its sign "The Joneses Welcome You" with the posh apartment building in Paris where not a single tenant has displayed his name by his doorbell.

Allan appreciated life's pleasures. A music lover, he acquired the best equipment that he could afford, and an infinity of records and later CD's. You could never get away from his apartment without listening to his latest discovery. He also came to love fine clothes, fine furniture, fine foods, gadgets, rugs, objets d'art. It was part of his superabundant vitality to care a lot even about rather trivial things; it was a side of himself that he often laughed at. His acquiring began in his Toronto years, before he had money. A colleague joked that at Christmastime the local Georg Jensen's displayed a banner reading "Thank you to our customer." By the time the wealth was there, the habits that presupposed it were well established.

Allan of course had vices, which, because his personality was so forceful, were obtrusive. His nervousness and intensity put people off. He could be abrasive and overbearing, and he sometimes argued unfairly. He loved attention, and he insisted on it. He dominated social situations so thoroughly as to drive hostesses to despair (he was grateful to those who put up with him). Parents never much liked him; he seemed too interested in their children's approval and not enough in their own. From his point of view, the case was simple. However nice the parents might be, it was too late to persuade them to devote their lives to studying Plato; there was hope only for the children.

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Away from the limelight Allan suffered from bouts of gloom and agitation. He agonized deeply, for example, over the intertwined destinies of America and Israel, over the state of American Jewry, over the worsening crisis of race relations. In his last years, he was preoccupied with the future of the university and of the learning that it was charged with transmitting. He tended to fear that his prophecies of decay would come true by the following morning; in fact their fulfillment usually took a little longer. Because of his moodiness, he could be difficult even or especially with his intimates. He often had a bee in his bonnet. His closest friends were those who knew how to argue with him; this for him established not only respect but intimacy.

By 1969 Allan seemed set at Cornell. Just then, however, the university blew up and caved in, bowing to demands made at gunpoint. Allan, like most of his faculty friends, felt that he had no choice but to resign. He was fortunate to land at Toronto with the closest of these friends, Walter Berns.

Allan's years in Toronto were probably his most tranquil; on a later visit there he described them as his happiest. He much admired the unique combination of traditionalism and tolerance that characterized Canadian life. He regarded Canada as the archetype of a well-ordered liberal society. He felt that no people was more decent than the Canadians, no colleagues more gentlemanly. He was particularly impressed by the late George Grant, the best-known Canadian thinker to remain little known in the United States. Grant was a great man, the other professor whom I have met who was larger than life, and Allan, sensing a kindred spirit, loved and admired him, as he did Grant's remarkable wife Sheila. A devout Christian and a Canadian loyal to his Loyalist forebears, Grant had meditated deeply on the writings of Simone Weil, Martin Heidegger, and Leo Strauss. The result was a profound critique of technological modernity and of the United States as its vanguard. It bemused Allan that George was forever signing petitions demanding Canadian withdrawal from NORAD and NATO. Here, however, was a man who was a genuine thinker and a brilliant conversationalist, whose passions were as intense as Allan's, and who, despite his critique of Americanism, respected Americans who were as loyal to their country as he was to his. It would take a subtler pen than mine to do justice to their relationship.

Allan enjoyed many other friends and admirers in Toronto. Perhaps nowhere else did he meet so many adults who, without quite understanding what he was about or without being able to enter into it, recognized his remarkable qualities and supported him loyally. He attracted many fine students in those years, and made great strides in understanding (especially in his work on Rousseau's *Emile*). After every class he would call me and excitedly share his new discoveries. In general he seemed in those years to be leading the life that best suited him.

For me, it was one thing to have studied with Allan as an undergraduate, quite another to study with him (for that was still what I was doing) as a colleague. The delicacy, the solicitude, the generosity that Allan showed me then remain among my most cherished memories of him. Recognizing the difficulty of my establishing my independence from him, he did everything to bolster it. When he heard that a certain undergraduate, reproached with being a Bloomian, had indignantly insisted that he was an Orwinian, he laughed delightedly. When I fumbled the ball, he recovered it, and, as he did not wish to wound my shaky self-confidence, months or years might pass before he would gently disclose to me how badly I had bungled.

Allan close up was very different from Allan at a distance. My wife and I soon learned that our education in human nature had scarcely begun. I learned many things, but above all I learned that my understanding was much too "idealistic." Allan saw that I would rather think the best of people (including myself and himself) than the truth about them. Allan had the strength to face harsh truths without wavering in his zest for life or his love toward friends. He taught us to accept the world as it was; he even persuaded us that it was more beautiful that way.

Allan finally became restless in Toronto, as he would have done after ten years almost anywhere. Besides, it was Chicago and the Committee on Social Thought that beckoned. Chicago shared with Paris the distinction of being home for Allan. There he had spent the decisive years of his life, studying with his great teacher Leo Strauss. There remained such intellectual titans of his youth as David Grene

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and Edward Shils, as well as good friends his own age and Nathan Tarcov, one of his best students. The great surprise of this second Chicago stint was his friendship with Saul Bellow. Each recognized in the other a genuine original. They regularly taught together, exploring their very different insights into a wide range of texts. Allan marveled at Saul's creative intelligence, so different from his own critical one; Saul saw in Allan the makings of a genuine writer. Allan had always taken great risks as a teacher; Saul encouraged him to take them as a writer. The result was *The Closing of the American Mind*, which began a new (and final) epoch in Allan's life.

Allan had always viewed himself as a teacher rather than a writer. Modest about his intellectual achievements, he had always deferred to the writings of Strauss. His previous publications had all grown out of his teaching, and most had been intended for use in it. They consisted primarily of commentaries on and translations of his favorite books, and they were meant for students. *The Closing* also grew out of his teaching, but it had the character of a report from the battlefront. It, too, was in a sense a modest book, which purported to recount nothing more than Allan's experiences as a teacher at three of North America's better universities. In it he accused such institutions of claiming to foster "openness" but of seeking, in the name of this very end, to stifle discussion of fundamental issues, thereby impoverishing education under the pretext of broadening it.

Allan elaborated this contention in detail, offering a provocative account of the whole history of Western thought culminating in this outcome. He also set out to explain why today's students and professors had become what they had become. He thus undertook to discuss the most controversial issues in American society: the decline of parental authority and the influence of feminism and of widespread divorce, the prevalence of drugs and rock music, the issue of race on campus, the effect of the New Left on the curriculum, the substitution of empty jargon ("psychobabble") for receptivity to genuine philosophic texts. Discussing these matters with a boldness and directness absent from other academic treatments, he opened many eyes and raised many eyebrows.

The phenomenal popular success of *The Closing of the American Mind* took Allan entirely by surprise. Overnight he found himself confronting wealth, fame, and notoriety. The wealth and fame he enjoyed with childlike glee, and he was amused to observe himself so doing. He loved to dial the 800 number that advised the caller of the coming week's *New York Times* best-seller list, and to hold out the receiver so his visitor could hear that Allan still commanded first place. He was thrilled when the business pages listed his book and Eddie Murphy as the two biggest money-makers for the Gulf and Western Corporation that year. On a more serious note, he was heartened that the book seemed to have done some good by emboldening others to speak out as he had done.

The notoriety was another matter. Allan had always been sensitive to what others thought of him (too sensitive, as he thought; this too was a topic of his jokes), and it stung him to be insulted by critics, many of whom either had not read the book or had willfully distorted his argument. Attacks on him became de rigueur for establishing the writer's political correctness (a term that may not yet have existed), and he was routinely denounced as racist, sexist, and elitist. Whole conferences were convened to denounce him, one of which a *Times* correspondent likened to the "minute of hatred" in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a staged frenzy of ritual execration. Allan did what a man of courage had to do: he fought back.

In the fall of 1990 Allan contracted Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a rare neurological disease that causes paralysis and atrophy. The initial onset was almost fatal. Allan's body, always robust in spite of his habitual neglect of it, was ravaged; his limbs had lost almost all of their flesh. Bedridden for months, he had to relearn how to walk and never regained full use of his hands. Even so, the pace and extent of his recovery were remarkable. Unfortunately he was only to enjoy it for a few months. December 1991 brought a sudden and again nearly fatal onset of acute diabetes; from this too he managed to rebound. Finally he suffered from a perforated peptic ulcer and from liver failure; yet again he rallied, but this time unsuccessfully.

Through this all, Allan soldiered on, and addressed himself to unfinished business. He resumed teaching and holding reading groups: that much went without saying. He continued

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to follow politics and the state of the universities. As he had always done, he welcomed countless visitors and spent hours on the telephone with friends, many of them his former students. Above all he labored to finish the second book for which he had contracted with Simon and Schuster. A large advance was involved, as was a determination to see in print this work by which he most wanted to be remembered. Entitled *Love and Friendship*, it dealt with his lifelong favorite themes as treated by his favorite writers: Rousseau, the great nineteenth-century novelists (Jane Austen, Stendhal, Flaubert, Tolstoy), Shakespeare, and Plato. Spending hours each day dictating to an amanuensis, he not only produced a draft but completed his final revisions of it.

My wife and I happened to be present in Chicago for most of that final year. I'd like not to rhapsodize on the way that Allan handled it. The last thing he would have wanted was for me to depict him as J.-L. David painted Socrates, all noble gesture and moral uplift. He feared death as much as (and loved life more than) the next man, but he faced it squarely. He wanted his friends around him, and he wanted to prepare them for the worst, but he also wanted to make this as easy for them as possible. For a man who had so many books in his head and who had taught them so eloquently, a signal achievement of his last months was that he never struck an edifying note.

Allan's death was an irreparable loss to all the members of his circle. That circle persists, however. His students are scattered throughout North America; he regarded as his greatest achievement the bonds of friendship that continue to unite them. They in their turn have succeeded in attracting students of their own. It has to be one of the more successful pyramid schemes around. And it's entirely legal; most of us even heed No Smoking signs. But, as none of us can be another Allan, so we can hardly hope to meet one. As Allan's favorite poet might have ended this (or some other) piece, we who are young will never see so much, nor live so long.

Irving Howe

1920–1993

Contributor, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

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Graffiti

Tunnel Notes of a New Yorker

LEONARD KRIEGEL

When I was eight, I loved to run with my friends through the tunnel leading into Reservoir Oval in the North Central Bronx. The Oval occupied the site of a former city reservoir dredged by the WPA and then landscaped with playgrounds, wading pools, softball fields, a quarter-mile dirt track, and some of the finest tennis courts in the city—all ringed by attractive bush- and tree-lined walks that provided a natural shield for the sexual probings of early adolescence. Nothing else that bordered our neighborhood—not the wilds of Bronx Park or the chestnut trees of Van Cortlandt Park or the small camel-humped rock hill in Mosholu Parkway down which we went belly-whopping on American Flyer sleds in winter—fed us so incontrovertible a sense that America's promise now included us as did the long green and gray sweep of Reservoir Oval.

We would run through that entrance tunnel like a pack of Hollywood Indians on the warpath, our whoops echoing off the walls until we emerged from its shadows into the lush green lawns and brick walks and playing fields. Our portion of the Bronx was an ethnically mixed stew of immigrant families and their children, many of whom had fled Manhattan's crowded Lower East Side tenements for the spacious, park-rich green borough where Jonas Bronck had followed his cow across the Harlem River three hundred years earlier. The Bronx was still the city's "new" borough in 1941. Sparsely settled until after World War I, our neighborhood contained typical New York working- and lower-middle-class families on the rise in an America emerging from the Depression.

We children had already been assimilated into the wider American world. All of us—Irish and Italian Catholic as well as Eastern European Jew—believed we could ride the dream of success to a singular destiny. We were not yet of an age where we could physically journey into that wider America the books we read and the movies we saw told us was ours for the taking. The Oval was where we played together. It was also where we sometimes fought each other over myths that grew increasingly foreign and more raggedly European with each passing day. (Not that we were unaware of our parents' cultural baggage: marriage between Italian and Irish Catholics was still considered "mixed" in 1941.)

Occasionally, I would chance the Oval alone, in search of more solitary adventure. A curious metamorphosis would envelope me at such times: the entrance tunnel seemed darker and more threatening, the shadows warning me to move cautiously past walls peppered with graffiti. Alone, I let loose no war whoops to echo through that emptiness. Instead, I picked my way carefully through that dark half-moon of enclosed space, as if the graffiti scrawled on its surface held the clue to my future. There was something menacing about words scrawled on walls. Like an archaeologist probing ruins, I might turn in terror at any moment and run back to the security of my apartment three blocks south of the Oval.

Most of the graffiti was of the "John loves Mary!" kind, no different from the scribbled

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notes we passed one another in the P.S. 80 school yard down the hill. But it was also on that tunnel's walls that I first read the rage and fury of those who stained the world with conspiratorial fantasies. As rage exploded like bullets, words burrowed into my consciousness. "Roosevelt Jew Bastard!" "Unite Unite / Keep America White!" "Father Coughlin Speaks Truth!" "Kill All Jews!" In the raw grasp of age-old hatreds, politics was plot and plot was history and that reality seemed as impregnable as it was inescapable.

Like adults, children learn to shape anger through the words they confront. The graffiti on that tunnel wall mobilized my rage, nurturing my need for vengeance in the midst of isolation. It wasn't simply the anti-Semitism I wanted vengeance upon; it was my own solitary passage through that entrance tunnel. As I moved through it alone, the tunnel was transformed into everything my budding sense of myself as embryonic American hated. Walking through it became an act of daring, for graffiti had converted its emptiness into a threat that could only be taken the way it was offered—a threat that was distinctly personal.

In no other part of that huge complex of fields and walks was graffiti in great evidence. Other than the occasional heart-linked initials carved into the green-painted slats of wooden benches, I remember nothing else defacing the Oval. One emerged from that tunnel and the graffiti disappeared—all of it, "John loves Mary!" as well as "Kill All Jews!" It was as if an unwritten compact had been silently agreed upon, allowing the tunnel leading to the Oval to be scrawled over (despite occasional whitewashing, the tunnel was dark and poorly lit) while the rest of that huge recreation complex remained free of the presence of graffiti. Running that tunnel alone was an act of purgation, rewarded when one was safely home with the illusion (and occasionally the reality) of ethnic harmony.

Other than that tunnel, the presence of graffiti was localized to a few alleys and subway stations and public urinals in the New York I remember from the forties and fifties. Until the sixties, even chalk and paint adhered to the unwritten laws of proportion in neighborhoods like mine. Buildings had not yet been crusted over with curlicued shapes and exploding slashes, zigzagging to a visual anarchy that testified to a love of color and line overwhelmed by hatred of the idea that color and line do not dictate the needs of community. Even the anti-Semitic graffiti of that tunnel remains in my memory as less the product of hatred than an expression of the distance existing between groups struggling to claim a portion of the American past.

In an essay published in 1973, Norman Mailer labeled graffiti a "faith," a word that struck me even back then as an odd use of language when applied to what a graffiti writer does. From the perspective of that eight-year-old child moving through that tunnel entrance, graffiti was the very antithesis of faith. It embodied a poetics of rage and hatred, a syntax in which anyone could claim the right, if he possessed the will, to impose his needs on others. But rage is not faith, as even an eight-year-old knew. It is simply rage.

In today's New York—and in today's London and Paris and Amsterdam and Los Angeles—the spread of graffiti is as accurate a barometer of the decline of urban civility as anything else one can think of. Paradoxically, even as it spread, graffiti was hailed as one of the few successful attempts the voiceless in our nation's cities made to impose their presence on urban culture. If graffiti is now the most obvious form of visual pollution city landscapes are forced to endure (even more polluting than those paste-up false windows with flower pots that grow like urban ivy on the deserted apartment houses fronting the Major Deegan Parkway in the East Bronx), it has assumed for New Yorkers the shape and frame of this city's prospects. Where expectation is confused with coherence, those savage slashes on brick and sidewalk embody our idea of all that city life is and all that we can now expect it to be.

In books and photographic essays, graffiti is heralded as the art structuring the real urban landscape that the poor confront in their daily lives. "Graffiti makes a statement!" is the rallying cry of those who defend its presence. True enough—even if one believes that the statement graffiti makes chokes the very idea of what a city can be. One can argue that it is not what the statement says but the style the statement employs that lends graffiti its insistent singularity. But the evidence of the streets insists that graffiti is an urban statement whose ultimate end is nothing less than the destruc-

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tion of urban life. Regardless of whether it is considered art or public nuisance, graffiti denies the possibility of an urban community by insisting that individual style is a more natural right than the communitarian demands of city life.

Defenders of graffiti may insist that its importance lies in the voice it gives to anger and that its triumph resides in the alternative it offers to rage. Perhaps so. But anyone who walks through the streets of today's New York understands that the price graffiti demands is an emotional exhaustion in which we find ourselves the victims of that same rage and anger supposedly given voice—*vented* is today's fashionable word—by these indiscriminate slashes of color plastered against brick and wall and doorway and telephone booth.

Contemporary graffiti is not particularly political—at least not in New York. On those few times when one spots graffiti that does seek to embrace a message, the politics seem prepubescent sloganeering. Few openly political sayings are lettered onto these buildings and walls. Even the huge graffiti-like wall mural of a small Trotskyite press that one sees driving north on West Street in lower Manhattan speaks not of politics but of a peculiar Third World clubbiness more characteristic of the early 1970s than of our time. Malcolm X, Che Guevarra—originally offered as a pantheon of Third World liberators, the faces over the years have taken on the likeness of the comic-book superheroes in whose image one suspects they were originally conceived and drawn. The future they appeal to is curiously apolitical, as if the revolution they promise lies frozen in a nineteenth-century photograph in which reality assumes the proportions of myth. One has the impression that these are icons that have been hung on the wall for good luck, like a rabbit's foot or one of those plastic Jesuses one sees hanging from the rear-view mirrors of battered old Chevys.

The single most effective political graffito I have seen over the past few years was not in New York. Last summer, as I drove through streets filled with the spacious walled-in homes and immaculate concrete driveways of a wealthy Phoenix suburb, on my way to visit Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West, I came across "Save Our Desert" slashed in large dripping red letters across a brown sun-drenched adobe wall surrounding one of the huge sun palaces that root like cacti in the nouveau riche wilds of Goldwater Country. Here was a graffito in which politics was central, a gauntlet thrown at the feet of developers for whom the Arizona desert is mere space to be acquired and used and disposed of for profit.

Perhaps because it is more traditional, political graffiti seems more understandable than these explosions of line and color and ectoplasmic scrawl now plastered like dried mucus against New York's brick and concrete. "Save Our Desert!" may be simplistic, but at least it expresses a desire to right a balance deemed unjust and unnecessary. Political graffiti intrudes on privacy by voicing a specific protest. This alone serves to distinguish it from the public stains New Yorkers now assume are as natural as blades of grass growing between the cracks in a sidewalk.

In 1972, I lived with my family in London. What little graffiti I saw in an England that had discovered the mod was still an expression of class and caste. It did not yet encrust London like a multi-colored scab. I remember no initials or words slashed across public monuments or statue pedestals.

On weekend afternoons, my wife and I and our two young sons would wander from stall to stall at the Portobello Road flea market. On one of those Saturdays, as my sons hopped from one seller hawking medals and military insignia to another, I walked off alone and found myself staring up at huge white letters spray-painted across a large gray Dickensian wall: "BOGSIDE OR CLYDESIDE," the letters read, "Support the Angry Side!"

A bitter strike was in progress at the Clyde River Ship Works in Scotland, while the struggle between Catholic and Protestant in the Bogside of Derry had already turned as murderous and self-righteous as, invariably, religious wars do. As my sons searched for military treasures, I stood transfixed before that rage of identity shaped by men unwilling to suffer indignities without trying to right the balance and even the score.

In 1972, I still thought of myself as in good part a product of my social class. The anger of Clydeside was easy enough for me to identify with. An allegiance to trade unionism—at times, a blind allegiance—was as much political religion as I could muster back then. But

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during the four months I had spent in London, I watched in bewilderment as the events in Northern Ireland were regurgitated on the nightly television news. The cool English accents of the BBC announcer served to make the Bogside more politically confusing than I could afford to acknowledge. I wanted a politics simple enough to fit the cut of ideology. Yet even after trips to Southampton to seek out dockworkers with whom I could discuss what was taking place in Ulster, I couldn't figure out which side I should be on: If anger and rage were the criteria, both sides seemed eminently worthy of support.

A few weeks later I, along with the rest of the world, would witness the murder of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. That was an easier religious war for me to understand, one that echoed and re-echoed with the tremors of the tunnel graffiti of my childhood. Birth and history told me very clearly which side I was on in the struggle between Arab and Jew. But between Ulster Protestant and Ulster Catholic, I knew nothing other than the boundaries of my ignorance. Not even that BBC voice calmly reciting the day's casualties made the struggle in Derry anything other than a free-fall of demands and counterdemands.

Why do these two images—the shadowy entrance tunnel to the playing fields of my childhood and the gray Dickensian wall in London—spring from the sheath of memory when I think about graffiti today? And I think about graffiti a great deal. For to live in my New York and not think about graffiti is to make oneself either purposefully blind or oblivious. Why is it that I find both "Death for Christ Killers!" and "Support the Angry Side!" somehow preferable to the curlicued shapes and exploding stars and slashing initials slapped like overturned garbage cans at curbside against the walls and trucks, the steel gates and red brick, the subway entrances and superb nineteenth-century cast-iron architecture of a city that grows more and more fragile with each passing day? Why does today's New York graffiti seem even more ominous than that 1941 scrawl "Kill All Jews!"? And why does the current state of this city seem to me more accurately captured by these wordless dispatches from rootless souls than by all the statistics about street crime and drug abuse and white flight to the suburbs in the *New York Times*?

Until about five years ago, I used to go back to my old neighborhood in the Bronx. Occasionally, I would drift through the decaying tunnel entrance to the Oval. The smells had grown more sour than when I was eight, and the faces of the children in the playground had grown darker. But those darker faces merely indicated that the ethnic successions that had been taking place in this city for the past hundred and fifty years were still taking place. Far more striking was how the graffiti had changed. No longer did the words echo with pent-up hatreds or speak of adolescent romance. Instead, the tunnel walls, along with the playing fields and playgrounds, were crusted over with color and line. In a city seething with the raucous claims of victimization hurled against counter-victimization, few privileges were demanded by that graffiti. As if in some huge art gallery, the focus was on color, line, ubiquitous form and curlicued signal. Like an avalanche, line and color moved toward an ultimate disintegration that would not violate the demands of those who had created these graffiti waves. In this New York, art now rode even the artists, while the new beckoned to the bored Columbus in each American soul.

We live in a culture in which the cartoon explosions of the graffiti artist Basquiat are heralded as the work of a Renoir or a Van Gogh. An Andy Warhol toy, taken up and then discarded by the whims of fashion, Basquiat's death by a heroin overdose is transmogrified into a mirror image of city life. Like Van Gogh's ear, it is the artist's physical presence, not the work, on which we are expected to concentrate. Even as art rides the artists, artists are transformed into what our conception of what city life should be demands.

On the surface, style has never been in greater demand than in today's New York. From an art in which performance is defined as a nude body covered by chocolate and music is the sound of silence, the culture reverberates to the beat of the contemporary. Curlicues and initials and slashes against conventional surfaces scream to be noticed. Claim is splashed against counter-claim. It is not talent but defiance that is sold as a commodity. From doorway and mailbox, from truck and metal store guards, from telephone booth and statue pedestal, Kilroy is here, there, and every-

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where. Only this Kilroy is no mere democratic signature. This Kilroy is not a name anchored to an idea of a country. This Kilroy stands before us in spasms of color, initialed explosions of red on white, black on red. And what, we ask as we listen to a boom box in some passing car in the street below, is more attractive than style in a city so intent on creating itself anew?

Over and over, voices insist that graffiti proves that behind the rage of urban poverty there remains an endurance of aspiration. Perhaps. But why should rage become so prevalent at a moment in history when style has been deemed so ubiquitous? That question speaks tellingly of the true politics of this "tough" city as it spins like a gyroscope out of control through our fashion-conscious age. Lured by myths celebrating their endemic toughness ("If you can make it here," Sinatra sings—and we New Yorkers echo him, even as we nervously glance over our shoulders to see who or what is coming up behind us—"you'll make it anywhere"), New Yorkers crave absolution through symbols: Bella Abzug's hats, Felix Rohatyn's suits, Al Sharpton's hairdo, the electric signs blinking through the cash-and-carry hustler's moment in Times Square, the graffiti scrawls on our streets.

The truth, of course, is that people in this city are anything but tough. New Yorkers endure conditions that would be unacceptable in most Third World cities. Even the city's millionaires live with a fatalism one might logically expect to find in illiterate Latin American peasants or Bosnian Muslims shunted from place to place to the horrible music of "ethnic cleansing." The real truth is that we New Yorkers more and more sound like people so used to being beaten over the head that our primary instinct is to hunker down and ride out any storm, burdened by the knowledge that another catastrophe is just around the corner. And so we try to turn a blind eye to these graffiti initials jumbled together like alphabet soup, plastered against wall and kiosk, public telephone and public urinal, staining our aspirations and our lives.

In 1973, when he wrote "The Faith of Graffiti," Mailer was able to view those wall stains as an urban stamp of vitality, the shifting emblems of a New York underclass alive and vibrant with the tremor of its inability to rest. But Mailer should have known better. Mailer was, after all, raised in Brooklyn. And he must have known that, in this chameleon of a city, the new quickly becomes the old, the lived-with, the used-by. Lacking substance, the new grows boring. And we begin to remember the not-new with a nostalgia that breeds a breakdown of confidence in what it is we actually do see. How long can one love the idea of New York at the cost of the actual city's reality? Not a question to be asked lightly in the physical and intellectual squalor in which we New Yorkers live now.

How unusually clear New York seems in black-and-white newsreels from the forties and fifties. Not that the streets were so much cleaner than they are today (they were somewhat cleaner, but New Yorkers have always been slobs and garbage has long since been among the city's badges). Not that one longs for the kitsch of double-decker buses on Fifth Avenue. But how solid and enduring the stone buildings appear in black and white, how singularly they command our affection. Yes, empty paper cups were discarded in the streets back then, too, and traffic bottlenecked into impregnable jams. But where are those savage strokes of line and color demanding recognition of rage as actuality? Why are the walls quiet with the grain of brick and granite instead of explosive with the desecration of graffiti? Did no one in that New York belong to the angry side? Did no one see his function in life as spray-painting red and black and orange initials on any surface that had the temerity to remain ignorant of his singular presence?

To deny this city's painful decline over the past three decades is to deny the obvious. One can measure that decline through the spread of graffiti. The process began with the insistence that these mindless blotches and savage strokes embodied a legitimate, if admittedly different, sense of fashion, that they could be viewed—indeed, they had to be viewed—as a "natural" expression of the new and daring. This is the gist of the argument Mailer makes, and it is not an argument we can afford to ignore even today. We certainly could not afford to ignore it back in 1973, as we witnessed graffiti's spectacular rise as a New York growth industry. Only today the vision has rubbed down, like overwatered brick that soon chips and crumbles, and these savage slashes of color fill us with a weary disgust at their seeming omnipresence. An ocean of painted ini-

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tials laps in growing waves against brick and concrete, even as we pretend it isn't there.

Like everything else in this city, graffiti demands an emotional investment from those who defend it. One can only vindicate these slashes and blobs of color because their presence is so overwhelming. What choice do we have but to demand that the world recognize the "art" in these urban voices? Anything else forces us to examine the consequences of what we have allowed through the intimidating fear of not being in fashion. Even as acceptance is demanded, graffiti continues to pound against the city, having grown as mechanical and fixed as the sound of the boom boxes in the streets below our windows. We label graffiti "real," we label it "authentic," we label it "powerful." Like true pedants, we discuss the nuances of these different voices. We create graffiti martyrs from Keith Haring, dead of AIDS, and from Basquiat, dead of a drug overdose. In their deaths, we tell ourselves, our city lives. For their art is "urban." And urban counts. Urban must count. If not, why have we permitted what has been done to this city we claim to love?

If the graffiti plastered first on subway cars and then on billboard and doorway and brick truly constitutes an art form, then it is an art that seeks to rip out the root idea of what supposedly created it—the idea that a specifically urban culture exists. Defended as a creative act in which the city itself becomes the artist's canvas, the paradox of graffiti is the extent to which its existence connotes an implicit hatred of what a city is and what it can offer its citizens. At the core of graffiti's spread lurks the dangerously romantic notion that the city is a place of such overwhelming evil that it must be torn apart, savaged into its own death, its residents given a "voice" in the irrational hope that in this way its more urbane voices will be stilled. Graffiti slashes at the heart of New York, the heart of urbanity, by attacking the city's splendid nineteenth-century monuments of cast-iron architecture in the resurrected Soho neighborhood of lower Manhattan as indifferently as it attacks the playful 1930s art deco apartment house façades that once made the now-dingy Grand Concourse in the Bronx so singularly playful an example of urban aspiration.

New Yorkers stand like helpless mannequins before the onslaught. Graffiti does not, after all, destroy lives. It is not like the scourge of crack, or the horrendous spread of AIDS, or the rising tension in our neighborhoods between blacks and Jews and between blacks and Asians. Graffiti is no more than a background for the homeless who cage themselves in makeshift cardboard boxes or laundry baskets at night or the crazies who walk the streets engaged in heated dialogues with Jesus or Lenin or Mary Baker Eddy or George Steinbrenner or the dead yet still-celebrated Basquiat. Graffiti is innocent, or so we continue to tell ourselves even in the face of powerful evidence to the contrary. "No one ever died from graffiti!" a friend impatiently snaps, as I point out a deserted bank on the northwest corner of Fourteenth Street and Eighth Avenue, its once-attractive façade gouged and stabbed by slashes of black spray paint. "There are more important problems in this city."

Of course, there *are* more important problems in this city. Yet none speak more directly to the true state of affairs in this New York than the mushrooming graffiti in our streets. And nothing traces the actual state of those streets better than the insistence graffiti makes that there are neither rules nor obligations for the survival of urban hope and aspiration. The prospect of a voice for the voiceless illuminates every dark alley in the New Yorker's mind, like the reflection of one of those stars already extinguished millions and millions of light years away. But is that to be all those of us who claim to love this city are finally left with, these dead light gleanings of one false revolution after another, beneath whose costly illusions—in the name of fashion—we have bent this great and wounded metropolis out of time and out of function and perhaps even out of its future?

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The Ladies of Observatory Hill

Annie Jump Cannon and Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin

GEORGE GREENSTEIN

One evening in 1919 a Cambridge University undergraduate named Cecilia Payne attended a public lecture by a famous astronomer. By Payne's account, her presence that night was something of an accident; her college had been allotted only four tickets, but at the last minute one of her friends was unable to go. I think it is no exaggeration to say that this accident changed her life. "When I returned to my room," Cecilia wrote in her autobiography decades later, "I found that I could write down the lecture word for word. . . . For three nights, I think, I did not sleep. My world had been so shaken that I experienced something very like a nervous breakdown." She decided to become an astronomer.

The lecturer's name was Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington. Some time later, Payne encountered him again, and she told him of her wish. "I can see no *insuperable* objection," Eddington replied after a meditative pause. Cecilia asked him what to read. He mentioned several books. She had already read them. He mentioned several journals. Payne was off in a flash, and she seems never to have slowed down. Not long after, she bicycled up to the observatory with a question in mind. She found someone astride the roof, conducting repairs. "I have come," she yelled up, "to ask why the Stark effect is not observed in stellar spectra."

Cecilia Payne had always been interested in science. As a child she once performed an experimental determination of the efficacy of prayer, dividing her school examinations into two groups and praying for success in one while failing to mention the others. (She ended up doing better in the second group.) On another occasion she wrote a tragedy in blank verse about a scientist who allowed himself to be corrupted by money and finally atoned for it by becoming a farmer. Nor had she neglected the arts: at the age of twelve she had given a piano recital and had asked the teacher if she could say a few words beforehand. Once permission was granted, Cecilia told the audience her piece was so beautiful it ought never to be played.

Born in 1900 and raised in rural England, Cecilia Payne left England in 1923 to begin work for her graduate degree at Harvard. She already knew what she wanted to do there. She wanted to explain a Grand Fact.

"We have without doubt in the heavens a grand fact," the director of the Vatican Observatory had written in 1868, "the fundamental distinction between the stars according to a small number of types." The most detailed description of these types had been given by the Harvard astronomer Annie Jump Cannon, whose monumental nine-volume study of stellar classification was nearing completion even as Payne arrived there.

It is not so obvious that the stars are of different types. A glance at the sky reveals them to lie in constellations—here a dipper, there a swan—but these patterns have no physical significance. Stars scatter more or less randomly across the sky: it is merely by accident that their arrangement occasionally

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reminds us of something we have seen before. Similarly, some stars are bright and some dim, but apparent brightness depends on the random happenstance of distance.

The true distinction among stars was not discovered until the mid-nineteenth century, and it rests on a phenomenon invisible to the naked eye. Hanging in Annie Cannon's home at Harvard was one of those lovely old chandeliers composed of glass prisms. As these prisms caught the sunlight, they cast a multitude of tiny rainbows upon her walls. White light, when broken into its constituent colors, forms a spectrum: a rainbow is the spectrum of our Sun. Nighttimes at the telescope, Cannon and other astronomers passed not sunlight but starlight through just such a prism, and they recorded on photographs the spectra, not of the Sun, but of the incomparably more distant stars.

These spectra turned out to differ from that of the Sun—rainbows on a planet orbiting a distant star differ from rainbows on the Earth. And the spectra differed from one another. But not completely so: stellar spectra were found to come in classes. The identification of these classes, and the ordering according to this scheme of a great number of stars, was Annie Jump Cannon's great contribution to astronomy.

Cannon had been born in 1863 in Delaware. Her father, a shipbuilder and lieutenant governor of the state, had cast the deciding vote against secession when the Civil War broke out. As a child she was fascinated by the nighttime sky, a love she shared with her mother, who had once taken a course in astronomy. The two would conduct observations from a makeshift observatory in the attic of their large house, taking notes by candlelight. It was rare for young women to receive an advanced education in those days, but Annie's parents sent her to Wellesley College in Massachusetts, where she studied physics. Upon graduating, she returned home, and for the next decade she made not the slightest effort to continue professionally.

The death of her mother, to whom she was very close, seems to have propelled Annie Cannon into her career. She returned to Wellesley for further study and then moved on to Radcliffe. In 1894 she was hired by the director of the Harvard Observatory and set to work to make some sense of its vast collection of stellar spectra. This was a project that would occupy her for the remainder of her life.

Every account I have ever read of Annie Jump Cannon mentions her serene, affectionate, engaging nature. In an obituary of Cannon (who died in 1941), Cecilia Payne writes that she was the happiest person she had ever known. Cannon seems to have had the knack of forming intimate and lasting friendships with everyone. She carried on a lifelong and extensive correspondence with family, childhood friends, college classmates, amateur and professional astronomers. Although she never married, she loved children and would regularly host parties for them in Star Cottage, her home on the observatory grounds. A photograph of her shows an aged lady dandling a child on her knee, surrounded by kids in party hats. She was an avid photographer and once produced a booklet of her photographs to be used by a camera company as a souvenir at the 1893 World's Fair.

In many ways the Harvard Observatory in those days must have been a delightful place. Situated on Observatory Hill, a mile or so up the road from the main campus, it was both physically and administratively somewhat separate from Harvard and Radcliffe. When Payne arrived, only Harlow Shapley, the director, carried a university appointment. Many astronomers lived on the observatory grounds and hardly ever mingled with the university faculty; at one point Payne wrote that, in her seven years there, her acquaintances had been limited to observatory staff and one physics professor. Staff members were regularly invited—and expected—to attend parties at the director's residence: there Shapley, jauntily set out in derby hat, would lead square dances and Virginia reels. One astronomer kept in his office a small box bearing the label "flashlight bulbs, probably burnt out."

When Annie Cannon began her work, the study of stellar spectra was in a state that can only be described as chaotic. By the turn of the century, more than twenty different classification systems of these spectra had been proposed. But which was the right classification system? Categories, of course, are utterly arbitrary. As the old joke goes, there are two types of people: those who insist on dividing people into types, and all the rest. Anybody who wished could perfectly well have classified stellar spectra alphabetically. While such a system

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would have some utility, this utility would not correspond to properties of the stars in and of themselves. A good way to sharpen the point is to ask whether a proposed system of classification is predictive—whether it can be used to determine in advance other stellar properties. Held to this standard, most of the proposed methods of stellar classification failed completely.

To discover a good system of classification requires long-term immersion in the data. The slightest of clues may ultimately turn out to be the most significant. Annie Cannon ate, slept, and breathed stellar spectra. She knew each star's spectrum as an individual. Payne has given us a charming portrait of Cannon at work. The astronomical photographs with which she worked were recorded on a glass plate. The plate would contain the images of tens to hundreds of stars, each smeared out by a prism into a spectrum no more than an inch long, often faint and blurred. Cannon would examine each spectrum through a magnifying glass, calling out her judgment to an assistant.

> When I first looked at these plates [Payne writes in her autobiography], I was amazed. . . . It seemed impossible that anyone could see enough in those tiny smears to classify the spectra. Sometimes, indeed, I would find one of Miss Cannon's numbers in a spot where I could see nothing but a faint blur.
>
> A legend was current that Miss Cannon could remember everything she had ever classified, and could immediately recall the serial number of the plate on which she had examined a particular star. But it is hard to believe that she could remember exactly *how* she had classified each of a quarter of a million spectra.
>
> In the last years of Miss Cannon's life, [an astronomer] said, "Somebody ought to find out from Miss Cannon exactly how she classifies each spectral type." I argued with him that she would not be able to tell them, because *she did not know.* She was like a person with a phenomenal memory for faces. She had amazing visual recall, but it was not based on reasoning. She did not think about the spectra as she classified them—she simply recognized them.

As a result of her deep familiarity with stellar spectra, Annie Cannon was able to cut through the chaos of nineteenth-century astronomy, with its numerous systems of stellar classification, and discover the best. The system she created is still in use today. She then used this system in a project that was to become her life's work: the classification of every star in the sky bright enough to appear on Harvard's library of photographs. It was an extraordinary achievement: on a crystal-clear night, in which the stars scatter like jewels across the sky, perhaps two thousand might be visible to the naked eye—but she classified nearly four hundred thousand. What Linnaeus did for the world of organisms, Annie Jump Cannon did for the stars.

By 1923, the year Cecilia Payne arrived at Harvard, Cannon had codified the criteria used in classifying stars. But she had provided not the slightest insight into what her various categories meant. In her Ph.D. thesis, Payne found that insight.

One might suppose that Cannon's spectral classifications corresponded to a progression in age, running from the youngest to the oldest stars. Many nineteenth-century astronomers, in fact, felt this would turn out to be the explanation. From a few comments Payne makes in her autobiography, my guess is that Payne also felt this to be the case at first. But her thesis showed this possibility to be false. A second possibility is suggested because Cannon's various categories of classification correspond to the signatures of various chemical elements. Her stars of type "A" showed evidence of hydrogen, while those of type "K" showed metals. Was it not natural to guess that "A" stars were composed of hydrogen, "K" stars of metals, and so forth? It was indeed natural—and wrong.

The spectrum of the Sun cast upon the walls of Annie Cannon's house by the prisms of her chandelier, and the spectra of stars cast upon photographic plates by an astronomical prism, ran the sequence of colors of the rainbow. Invisible to the naked eye, however—invisible because they were so narrow—were dark vertical lines where each spectrum was interrupted. These so-called spectral lines marked a set of colors absent from each spectrum. They were absent because, although emitted by the star, light of these particular colors was subsequently absorbed.

The light was being absorbed by atoms in the atmosphere of the star. Only certain colors were absorbed because an atom was capable of absorbing only certain energies, and the en-

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ergy of light depended on its color. Payne knew that atoms could exist only in a restricted set of energy levels, much as a person standing on a ladder could occupy only the lowest rung, the second rung, and so forth. The absorption of light would cause an atom to jump from a lower to a higher rung, but the light's energy had to be just right—too small would not be sufficient to move the atom to the next available level, while too great would attempt to move it one and a fraction levels, also impossible. Thus the spectral lines.

All this was relatively straightforward and well known before Payne began her work. The complicating factor was that not all spectral lines were accessible to astronomical observation. The Earth's atmosphere was transparent only to a relatively limited range of colors—roughly the range corresponding to visible light. And for many atoms visible light corresponded, not to a transition upwards from the lowest level, but from a higher level. If these atoms happened to be occupying their lowest energy state, their spectral lines would lie in an inaccessible region of the spectrum. To Cannon, such lines would appear to be absent.

Cannon had classified stellar spectra by identifying the elements producing spectral lines. Payne showed, however, that the absence of a particular line was no proof of absence of the corresponding element. Rather it simply meant that the atoms were situated at some inconvenient energy level. What was it that determined whether an atom would be occupying those particular levels that produced the lines Cannon observed? The answer had been found by the Indian physicist Meg Nad Saha: it was temperature. At low temperatures, all the atoms of a star's atmosphere would occupy their lowest energy states. But as the temperature increased, they would progressively move up the ladder to higher and higher rungs. Only when the temperature of the star was appropriate would Cannon see the lines in its spectrum.

With this insight, the chain of explanation was complete. The "grand fact" that spectroscopists had discovered nearly sixty years earlier arose from the circumstance that some stars were hotter than others. The parameter underlying Cannon's system of classification was temperature. Her "O" category turned out to represent the hottest stars, with temperatures of seventy thousand degrees Fahrenheit. Her "M" category, the coolest, lay just over four thousand degrees. (For comparison, blast furnaces operate at about three thousand degrees.)

The essential insight had not come from Payne but rather from Saha. But Saha had not exploited his idea to the fullest. To test his theory fully, it was necessary to know the actual pattern of energy levels for each chemical element. When Saha did his work, this data was not available. By the time Payne began her thesis, atomic physics laboratories were beginning to provide the information, but Saha's isolation in India had prevented him from obtaining their data.

Payne's Ph.D. thesis, completed in 1925, was a gigantic compendium and a remarkable work. In it she combined the very latest data with the most modern theoretical refinements to Saha's theory, which was itself a mere few years old. On occasion she would turn the problem around, using astronomical observations to deduce what the energy level structure of some chemical element would have to be: experiments performed later in Earth-bound laboratories showed her inferences to be correct.

Reaction to Payne's work was enthusiastic. Henry Norris Russell, one of the leading astronomers of the day whose student, Harlow Shapley, had gone on to become director of the Harvard Observatory, wrote to say it was the best thesis he had ever read with the possible exception of Shapley's own. A review published years later termed it "undoubtedly the most brilliant Ph.D. thesis ever written in astronomy." Sir Arthur Eddington, who back at Cambridge had inspired Cecilia Payne in her first steps in astronomy, thought it "not so wild as might at first appear."

A group photograph has been preserved, taken the year Payne completed her thesis, of all the women at the Harvard Observatory. Fifteen of them stand before the ivy-covered walls and lead-glass windows. Annie Cannon gazes off into space—she appears positively grandmotherly. Cecilia Payne is staring squarely at the camera. Her expression is serious, her dark hair combed neatly back.

Payne chain-smoked and had little interest in clothing. She wore her hair short, was big-boned and unusually tall for a woman, and had a faint moustache. She was passionate

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about her work and could be jealous of a colleague's success, a jealousy that was sometimes noticed. She thought of herself as shy and unattractive. Her daughter writes that she never saw her cry.

Payne could be formidable on occasion. But to those who knew her, this stern demeanor often melted away. In the late 1920s a certain college student would regularly drop into her office for chats. At the time, Payne was established in her field, widely respected, a mature scientist; the student was scarcely a novice. Nevertheless she would talk with him for hours—about astronomy, about the arts, about the latest slight she had received from the observatory director. He found her warm and sentimental and possessed of a wonderful sense of humor. She would quote extensively, from memory, Gilbert and Sullivan patter songs, he would respond with a little T. S. Eliot, and the conversation would wander off into metaphysical reaches. This undergraduate was my father; I have rarely heard him speak of anyone with so much warmth and affection as when he described Cecilia Payne to me.

Payne was erudite in several languages and addicted to puns in all of them. For recreation she would learn a new language. "Icelandic was a minor challenge," her daughter writes, adding somewhat unnervingly, "I cannot say she truly mastered it." Her conversation was rich in anecdote. Payne, who was deeply affectionate, tended to form passionate attachments to both men and women. These attachments might become so intense as to resemble love affairs. She was capable of agonizing for weeks over a slight, real or imagined, and would suffer miseries if a recipient of her affections proved unworthy. Many of her closest relationships were with other women at the observatory. No one has ever suggested that there was anything remotely sexual about these attachments, but there does appear to have been a romantic tinge to her admiration for certain male astronomers, often authority figures—Eddington was one, and Harlow Shapley another. Neither of these men was available, since Shapley was married and Eddington a withdrawn, aloof individual.

What are we to make of these quasi-sexual attachments? It is easy enough to smile knowingly at them. Payne thought herself unattractive, and for many years seems to have felt she would never marry. But to my mind this is too simplistic; it demeans the importance of the intense admiration one feels for an acknowledged authority in one's field. These leaders are the ideals toward which every scientist strives. Such admiration very often spills over from the professional into the personal: in her case, the person in question was of the opposite sex.

Cecilia Payne's autobiography is often charming, but it suffers at points from a personal reserve, and a syrupy sweetness that I find unconvincing. Payne's descriptions of her experiences as a woman scientist, on the other hand, ring with a bitter honesty. She explicitly describes as a struggle her efforts to receive a scientific education as a child. At one point, having declared an interest in science, her school principal openly told her that she would be prostituting her gifts. On another occasion she won a school competition, the award for which was a book of her choice. It had been expected that she would choose something on the order of Shakespeare, but she asked instead for a book on fungi. Her teachers reacted with horror, doing everything in their power to dissuade the recalcitrant child.

At college, Cecelia Payne was regularly humiliated in class by the famous physicist Ernest Rutherford.

> I was the only woman student who attended [his lectures] and the regulations required that women should sit by themselves in the front row. There had been a time when a chaperone was necessary but mercifully that day was past. At every lecture Rutherford would gaze at me pointedly, as I sat by myself under his very nose, and would begin in his stentorian voice: "*ladies* and gentlemen." All the boys regularly greeted this witticism with thunderous applause, stamping with their feet in the traditional manner, and at every lecture I wished I could sink into the earth.

Annie Cannon has left us no autobiography detailing her childhood experiences. But even though she went to a women's college, I would guess she, too, faced much opposition in her love of science. What can account for these young women's determination in the face of such disgraceful behavior? On the one hand, it is obviously significant that both Cannon's and Payne's parents broke with tradition in

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having educated their daughters. It may also be significant that both women grew up with strong and loving attachments to their mothers. Payne's father died when she was four, and, aside from her brother, all the important figures in her early life were strong women. Cannon, as noted earlier, shared her early love of the sky with her mother.

In the early years, neither Payne nor Cannon was allowed to use a telescope to conduct regular observations, the excuse being that it was dangerous for a woman to observe alone and inappropriate for one to spend the night with a man. They were, by necessity, astronomers without a telescope (this practice was common at most observatories). Although Payne regularly taught courses at Harvard after obtaining her degree in 1925, it was twenty years before the university got around to listing her courses in the catalogue. Cannon did not receive a university appointment until she was in her seventies. As for Payne, even though Shapley supported her, Harvard's president explicitly told him that she would never have a position there as long as he lived. In fact, she did not receive one until she was in her mid-fifties, when she was made professor and head of the department; this was the first time that Harvard admitted women as full members of the faculty. Both Cannon's and Payne's salaries were far below those of their male colleagues.

"Young people, especially young women, often ask me for advice," Cecilia Payne writes in her autobiography. "Here it is, *valeat quantum.* Do not undertake a scientific career in quest of fame or money. There are easier and better ways to reach them. Undertake it only if nothing else will satisfy you; for nothing else is probably what you will receive."

In later life, numerous honors did, in fact, come to both Annie Cannon and Cecilia Payne. But, for Annie Cannon, the question of honors is a difficult one. Her codification of the present stellar classification scheme was a major step, whose importance cannot be disputed. But she achieved this relatively early in her career. With minor exceptions, she did nothing more after that than classify stars—and I use the words "nothing more" here intentionally. In this task, Cannon was like a person who, every working day of her life, walks through a forest picking up leaves and identifying them—this one is an oak, that one a maple. The task required great diligence, but it was utterly repetitive and required scientific expertise only in one narrowly defined field. In a telling comment, Payne at one point notes that a colleague of Cannon's "was always slowing things up by asking what it meant." Annie Cannon never asked what it meant. It was Payne who asked, and answered, that question.

Cannon's life's work, the catalogue of nearly four hundred thousand stars, has proved an invaluable tool for generations of astronomers. But did this justify the bestowal of so many honors? Such a question about the value of a scientist's work is always a judgment call. In answering it, I am aware of the multitude of injustices Cannon faced in pursuing her career. Nevertheless, I must offer my opinion for what it is worth: I believe it did not.

Cecilia Payne was one of the first female astronomers to marry without terminating her career. How this came about makes for a curious tale. Commencing in the summer of 1932, three of her dearest friends died in close succession. As a result, she resolved to live life more fully—by her own account, she had to that point been so immersed in astronomy that not even the stock market crash of 1929 had made much of an impression on her. She promptly fell in love, a love that was not reciprocated. The next year she embarked on a trip to Europe and the Soviet Union. In Stalinist Russia she was appalled by the conditions under which the astronomers lived and worked. For this reason, she was particularly receptive to the overtures of the Russian émigré Sergei Gaposchkin, whom she met shortly thereafter at a meeting in Germany.

"There are many wonderful anecdotes about Sergei that are true," my father has commented, "and equally many that are not." He was the sort of person around whom tall tales congregate. The son of a Russian laborer, he was forced by economic circumstances to leave school at age seventeen. After numerous odd jobs, he washed ashore—literally—in Turkey. Ultimately he obtained two Ph.D.'s, the first in literature and the second in astronomy. At the time he encountered Payne, Sergei's employment (at a German observatory) was threatened by the Nazis. He pleaded with her to help him obtain a job in the United States.

Sergei thrust into Cecilia's hand a written account of his history. That night she read it.

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"I have not spent many sleepless nights," she writes in her autobiography, "but that one was sleepless. Perhaps this, I thought, is my one chance to do something for someone who needs and deserves it." Gaposchkin's boss had already written Shapley to ask if a position was available; Shapley had responded there was not. But Shapley had not reckoned on the determination of the woman who had written one of the best, not to mention the biggest, astronomical Ph.D. theses in history. Payne bombarded Shapley with letters and, when she got back home, personal appeals. Ultimately Shapley surrendered and offered Sergei a job. Not long thereafter, Cecilia and Sergei married. Her colleagues were frankly astonished by the turn of events. "I sincerely hope that it turns out splendidly," Henry Norris Russell commented in a letter to a friend, "but I keep wondering how it happened."

Cecilia and Sergei collaborated scientifically for the rest of their lives. In this relationship, even though she was several years younger than Sergei, she was always the senior partner. Her salary was at least twice his, and she was widely regarded by their colleagues as the better scientist. At home much of the housework was left to Sergei. They had three children, whom they would routinely bring to work. The children roamed the observatory, exploring every nook and cranny, to the point that the department formally voted to warn one of them not to disturb readers in the library. Cecilia was out of town at the time and took the vote as a personal insult.

Sergei was in many ways a hindrance to Cecilia's career. He "was rude to many who might have helped him," the historian of science Peggy Kidwell has written, "and undiplomatic with those who gave him opportunities. He was quick to take offense, yet spoke his own opinions with little regard for what others might think. He openly stated his admiration for female assistants at the Harvard Observatory and expected them to be as impressed by his muscular physique as he himself was." At one point when Cecilia was being considered for the presidency of a small college, his abrasive personality was mentioned as an impediment, and the position eventually went to someone else. Many people feel that the scientific work that she did in collaboration with him was of inferior quality.

Sergei was a wild and woolly character who could be exasperating and wonderful by turns. He wrote and privately published a three-volume autobiography entitled *Divine Scamper: Biography of Humanity.* It seems to have been cobbled together from a series of mimeographed, illustrated broadsides with which he would bombard friends. These were a marvelous hodgepodge of family matters, accounts of scientific discoveries, and personal reminiscences—some true, others not quite so true.

In many ways Cecilia Payne's choice of a husband made good practical sense. At the time, a woman who married was expected to abandon her career in order to further the career of her husband. (Numerous examples exist of female astronomers whose professional lives were thus ended.) But Cecilia's salary, low as it was, greatly exceeded Sergei's. As a family, they could not possibly have survived on his salary alone. Furthermore, their relationship seems to have been in many ways a warm and loving one. Cecilia never allowed a word against Sergei in her presence, and made numerous attempts to advance his career. As for Sergei, their role reversal must have been difficult for him, but he never showed it. "Cecilia," he once grandly announced to my parents, "is an even greater scientist than I am."

Shortly after completing her thesis, Cecilia Payne made a trip to England. There she met a famous spectroscopist. "Miss Payne," he said dryly, "you are very brave."

In 1835 Auguste Comte had written that we would never learn the composition of the stars. Presumably they were made of *something*, but what this "something" was would forever remain unknown. It was an unfortunate prediction, for within a generation spectroscopists were regularly identifying in stars various chemical elements through their spectral lines. By the turn of the century, evidence of thirty different elements had been found in the Sun. Most notable of all was helium, which, as its name suggests—*Helios* is Greek for Sun—was first discovered in the Sun's spectrum, and only years later found on Earth.

By the time Payne began her work, it was possible not merely to identify the various elements in the distant stars, but to calculate quantitatively the amount of each element. While the strength of a spectral line depended on whether the appropriate rung in the lad-

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der of energy levels was populated, it also depended on how many atoms characterized by that particular ladder were present. Thus much of Payne's thesis was devoted to a detailed estimation of the abundances of the elements in the stars.

Payne got into trouble over hydrogen. The simplest element, hydrogen, is not particularly prevalent on Earth, but Payne found it to be extraordinarily prevalent in the stars. Indeed, she found them to be composed almost exclusively of this one element, with but traces of all the others.

But no one believed her. Eddington, her early mentor to whom she had once been attracted, did not believe her. Henry Norris Russell, mentor of her boss, did not believe her either, and he told her so in a letter. "I am convinced," he wrote, "that there is something seriously wrong with the present theory. It is clearly impossible that hydrogen should be a million times more abundant than the metals." Faced with such opposition, Cecilia Payne backed down. She retracted her discovery, writing in her thesis that her enormous value for the abundance of hydrogen was "improbably high, and almost certainly not real."

There is nothing unusual about such scholarly disagreement. It happens every day in science, and it is the stuff of progress in the field. But, in this case, all of the power was on the opposing side. Eddington and Russell were among the leading astronomers of the world. Cecilia Payne was a mere graduate student. And she was a woman.

In 1664, the first secretary of the Royal Society defined science as "masculine philosophy," a comment of symbolic importance in social history. It expressed an attitude toward female scientists that persisted for centuries. Maria Mitchell, the most famous American woman astronomer of the nineteenth century, worked part-time as a librarian. Annie Russell, an astronomer at the Greenwich Observatory, resigned after marrying to assist, for no pay, her husband in his work. Caroline Herschel, who discovered eight comets, abandoned a career in astronomy to assist her brother William, recording his observations and feeding him by hand when he ground glass for his telescopes. William went on to become one of history's most famous astronomers, and Caroline's role has by now been almost forgotten.

Between 1859 and 1940, fully one out of three American astronomers was a woman. I find this an utterly astonishing statistic, for women's names are conspicuous only by their absence from the textbooks and histories of astronomy. Why have these women been erased so thoroughly from the historical record? What made them so invisible? A large part of the answer is contained in a second striking statistic: half of these female astronomers had careers lasting less than five years. These women were astronomers only briefly. Science for them was temp work.

The emergence of this large class of invisible astronomers dates from the late nineteenth century, and it seems to have been caused by the invention of photography. Previously, astronomical data had been gathered by looking through the eyepiece of a telescope, which was extremely slow work. But the new advance of photography enabled a tremendous increase in the rate of gathering data. A single astronomical photograph would reveal literally hundreds of stars, all requiring careful study. The necessity arose of finding people to do this study.

No need existed for them to be fully trained astronomers, for their task was strictly limited. None had advanced degrees. These were the invisible women who swelled the ranks of astronomy but remained forever on its periphery. Annie Cannon was one, and her work was characteristic of them all: limited, repetitive, and requiring no great overall scientific competency. Such competency was actively discouraged by the astronomers—all male—who directed these technicians in their work. It would have decreased their productivity. "I always wanted to learn the calculus," one of these women commented, "but [the director] did not wish it."

These were the ladies of Observatory Hill, among whom Cannon and Payne stood for their photographic portrait. They were not the only female astronomers of the time: a few fully trained women scientists did exist. But as for the far more numerous technical assistants, the historian of science Margaret Rossiter has compared them to assembly-line workers in a factory whose output was science. They were poorly paid, and just as the output of a factory brings few honors to its workers, so the scientific output of a department organized in this fashion brought little recognition to its technical staff. The system of classifica-

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tion Annie Cannon devised came to be known as the Harvard system, not the Cannon system. She stayed invisible. Nor was this practice of employing teams of anonymous assistants confined to Harvard, or even the United States; it was widely practiced in Europe as well.

As I mentioned earlier, Cecilia Payne was one of the first women astronomers to wed. Many institutions maintained a rigid policy of not allowing their female teachers to marry. At one point a dispute erupted at Barnard College about whether a female physics instructor would be allowed to remain on the faculty after marrying. In spite of strong appeals by the department head, Barnard's dean refused, the rationale being that Barnard would not countenance presenting to its students the dismal example of a woman for whom home duties were of secondary importance. Male faculty, on the other hand, were actively encouraged to marry.

Use of the world's greatest telescope, the Palomar Observatory in southern California, was explicitly restricted to male astronomers until as late as the mid-1960s. Before the Second World War, out of seventy-nine astronomers elected to the American Philosophical Society, only three were women. Not until 1978 was a female astronomer elected to the National Academy of Sciences. A defender of the status quo could always argue that the appropriate candidates were not available. This may or may not be true; but in any event abundant evidence exists to show that female candidates for such honors were scrutinized far more carefully than their male counterparts. On one occasion, a famous scientist explicitly inquired of a woman colleague, "If all the ladies should know so much about spectroscopes and cathode rays, who will attend to the buttons and the breakfasts?" This question, asked or merely implied, constituted the environment in which women scientists labored for centuries.

In such an environment, it is hard to imagine that Payne would have been believed in her assertion that the stars were composed almost exclusively of hydrogen. Her claim ran counter to the prevailing temper of the day. Opinion and the herd instinct operate in science just as much as in other fields. In the long run, contentious issues are resolved objectively, once firm evidence is found and irrefutable arguments are developed. But research scientists do not live in the long run. Their lives are spent in a state of perpetual ambiguity. Partial evidence is uncovered, tentative arguments and conflicting insights proliferate. How one negotiates one's way through such a twilight state is a matter of personal taste—and of the subtle shifts in the prevailing opinions of the day. At any given stage in the development of a body of knowledge, even though no firm conclusion has been reached, prevailing opinion will usually be found favoring one particular view. So common is this phenomenon that scientists have a term for it: "the bandwagon effect."

The researcher with a new idea is faced with an entire world that must be moved in order to win acceptance: a world of people convinced that the idea is wrong; a world of evidence, hardly irrefutable but persuasive nevertheless, that must somehow be overcome. It is not an easy task—not for the most eminent scientist, and certainly not for a graduate student who also happens to be female. In spite of the common image of the heroic scholar battling in solitary splendor for acceptance of a revolutionary new idea, events do not happen in this storybook sort of way very often.

It may not even be wise to push too strongly for one's new idea. After all, it might be wrong. Indeed, most new ideas are wrong. In the effort to explore an unfamiliar universe, trial and error is the mode of operation. The person who invests years of time on one revolutionary notion is a person who has gambled on a long shot.

What should you do if you think you have made an important discovery counter to prevailing opinion? Over lunch a number of years ago, one senior colleague ventured to me the opinion that the best strategy would be to marshal all the evidence in your favor, and make the case as forcefully as possible—and then you should quit. Get out of the field, he counseled, and leave the subsequent battle to others. In the long run, if the idea turns out to be false, you will not have wasted years of your life defending it; and, if it turns out to be true, people will know who thought of it.

Sound advice, I have always felt—and this is precisely what Cecilia Payne did. Although she seems never to have changed her mind, she made no further public effort to persuade people that stars were composed almost exclu-

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sively of hydrogen. Aside from everything else, her choice made another kind of sense, for certainly her thesis would never have been received so warmly, had so great an effect on the field, had she adopted any other course.

In saying Payne could hardly have won this argument, I do not wish to imply that Eddington and Russell were wrong in opposing her. They had good reasons for their positions. At the time Payne's thesis was published, Eddington was putting the finishing touches on his theory of stellar structure. The idea that stars were composed primarily of hydrogen did not mesh with his theory. Eddington had developed a whole list of arguments, none of them convincing when taken alone, but impressive in their number and variety, all pointing to a low hydrogen abundance, the opposite conclusion of Payne's. Furthermore, such a low abundance, far from constituting a peripheral element of his theory, was intimately woven into its fabric in a number of ways.

Eddington wielded enormous influence. He was aristocratic, reserved, handsome, and elegant—he was eventually knighted. But above all he was brilliant. Few of his contemporaries were capable of creating so comprehensive an edifice as his theory of stars. Therefore, few were willing to challenge it: people had gotten into the habit of simply listening to what he had to say. As for Russell, he was perfectly well aware that Payne had some arguments on her side, but he felt that he had more on his side. As early as 1914, he had published a paper arguing that the abundances of the elements showed a striking uniformity across the entire astronomical universe. So far as could be determined at the time, the chemical composition of the crust of the Earth appeared to be pretty much the same as that of the Sun, which in turn was similar to that of the meteorites that fell from the outer reaches of the solar system. The notion of a universal composition was in the air: the heavens were made of the same stuff as the Earth.

Payne was claiming that the heavens differed from the Earth—differed fundamentally, differed in their very substance. But her arguments were far from ironclad. A fully detailed analysis of the abundances of the elements would require the full theory of atomic structure—quantum mechanics—which at the time was still in its infancy. She had taken shortcuts, made assumptions, which only further work could test.

In the end, Eddington and Russell turned out to be wrong and Cecilia Payne right—and it was Russell who proved this point. Over the next four years he worked to develop the full mathematical theory of spectral lines, and eventually he found himself forced to side with Payne. In 1929, he published a magisterial paper on the composition of the Sun, in which he referred to "the very gratifying agreement" between his new conclusion and Payne's earlier ones. In his paper he gave full credit to her earlier claim—but, as the historian of science Peggy Kidwell has emphasized, nowhere did he so much as mention his role in having once persuaded her to back down.

In the course of working on this essay, I found the photographic portrait of the ladies of Observatory Hill regularly recurring in my thoughts. Ultimately I realized that a particular element in that apparently prosaic image was nagging for my attention: the presence in it of Cecilia Payne. The photo, indeed, presents yet another instance of classification, in this case one according to sex. But was that an appropriate classification? Everyone seems to have thought so—even Payne, who included it without comment in her autobiography.

But while Annie Cannon fits comfortably into this portrait, Cecilia Payne does not. In an important sense, Cecilia Payne was not a member of the group in which she stood. Properly speaking, she should have taken her place in another group photograph, that of the professional astronomers—the men. But no one saw fit to place her there.

Cecilia Payne was a transitional figure in the history of women in science. Annie Cannon was of the old breed, and she was comfortable with her place. Cecilia Payne was the first of the new. Decades later, on the occasion of her being appointed head of the astronomy department, she invited all the women students to a celebratory tea. "I find myself in the unlikely position of a thin wedge," commented this massive, sturdy woman, to gales of laughter from the happy crowd.

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Is It All Right to Read Trollope?

LOUISE WEINBERG

I have been reading through Trollope again and find I am becoming a little defensive about it. My friends who are Trollope readers seem defensive too. They are not sure if it is all right to read him. My friends who are not Trollope readers wonder why we do read him.

That first question, about whether it is all right to read Trollope, seems to have arisen, as everybody knows, because Trollope skewered his own reputation in his autobiography. Those orderly work habits! Those recorded earnings, down to the shillings and pence! To the Victorians he made himself seem like a Grub Street hack. But surely these days we have got over the Victorians' romantic delusion that the true mark of a life in the arts is a feckless bohemianism. In fact, Oxford University Press now has come out with new hardcover sets of the Barsetshire and parliamentary novels, and bright new softcover offerings of these and other Trollope works. Somebody must be buying them. There is an outpouring of new biographies. And yet (as Trollope would say—he loves to begin lines with "And yet," or even "But yet"), something remains seriously wrong with his reputation today. There are readers who not only don't but won't read Trollope. Above all it is the English who refuse to read him. It is their idea that only horrible people do (I envision maiden aunts and retired majors). I suppose their feeling is that Trollope has become, or always was, middlebrow. He is to be lumped, in this, with Gilbert and Sullivan, who have nothing else in common with Trollope except their undervalued wonderfulness. The irony is that this essentially English author is becoming an American taste. Whoever the "horrible people" may be who read Trollope, we Americans have joined them. Frankly, I suspect we *are* the horrible people.

I talked all this out in London with a youngish person in publishing. She said, "Look: Trollope is second-rate Dickens. If we wanted that sort of thing we would read the genuine article, thank you very much." Her companions made little English umphing sounds of accord. She added, "And anyway everyone's bored with Dickens." I do not know why she paired Trollope with Dickens. Perhaps she meant that Dickens is middlebrow. Perhaps she was thinking, as people who have not read Trollope tend to do, of Trollope's penchant for arch names with meanings. But it is a mistake to pair Trollope with Dickens, and not only because people like me could not conceivably form a project to re-read Dickens. (Like my English friend, we are bored with Dickens.)

The two writers have very little in common. Dickens, after all, has a progressive social agenda. He is trying to soften our inner sternness toward what today we might call the homeless, the underclass, and the working poor. He wants us to see how *adorable* grubby people really are, and how endearing their annoying characteristics can be, and how cruel the middle classes and their institutions can be to lovably vulnerable women and children. Trollope is not interested in any of this. It is in explicit reaction to Dickens, whom he calls "Mr. Sentiment," that Trollope announces, in *The Warden*, that his own characters will be both endearing and venal at the same time, like people. Of course, as Trollope at once in the same place confesses, he loves Dickens; he

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marvels at Dickens's secondary characters, who live; "yes, live, and will live" until the very name of nurse shall be Mrs. Gamp. And no doubt Dickens does transcend his own programme from time to time, notably in such masterworks as *Great Expectations*. But Trollope does not have the glamorous genius that could have given us a Miss Havisham and her Estella. These characters are too lurid, too unreal; Trollope could never have conceived of them. Trollope simply does not have the dazzle of Dickens.

My English acquaintance used the damning "second-rate." She was expressing the general feeling that Trollope is not "literature," not high art. He may be singularly entertaining, but he seems somehow lightweight; there is a want of grandeur there. I believe that Henry James, my other favorite writer, once said of Hardy that whatever his faults, he could *strike the tragic note*. Now, Trollope does not strike the tragic note; James called Trollope the master of the ordinary. Not that Trollope's pages do not darken occasionally. One thinks of Melmotte's end in *The Way We Live Now*, or the utter ruin of Lady Laura's life in the Phineas Finn books. And there are heart-stopping missteps: the forged deed of *The Way We Live Now*; the forged will of *Orley Farm*; Lizzie Eustace's stolen diamonds. But these shadows seem to fall gently under Trollope's calm, compassionate eye. He is not in the tragedy business. The funny thing, though, is that I am not sure Henry James ever struck the tragic note either.

Actually, Trollope and James have quite a bit in common. I do not mean only that both writers are preoccupied by threats to unworldly people from the worldly: in Trollope, from the worldly new; in James, from the worldly old. Indeed, eerily identical material appeals to them; both make a good thing of the visiting Continental adventuress and her bohemian artist brother—James in *The Europeans*; Trollope in part of *Barchester Towers* (Trollope beat James to the punch by about twenty years). The more important thing, the grand thing these otherwise dissimilar writers give you in common, is an intimate narrative companion. He is very good company indeed, this companion: urbane, suave, worldly, yet confiding, gossipy, chatty. And this companion knows how to strike the note of hilarity.

But Trollope's books, unlike James's, will not build toward some paroxysm of interpersonal anguish, or some creepy revelation. James does have grandeur, even without striking the tragic note, even discounting his aesthetic theory and mannered prose. It is not at all surprising that people would make pilgrimages to James's house in Rye and call him "Master." No one would think of behaving that way toward Trollope. Trollope has none of the *mystery* of James.

Anyway, all of this may be beside the point. I am beginning to suspect, rather, that if it is not all right to read Trollope these days it is because he is not "politically correct." After all, isn't the most powerful presence in Trollope, hovering over virtually every page, the English gentleman? The question "What is an English gentleman?" transfixes Trollope, and his characters keep falling short in a thousand ways. No one wants to be perceived as reading such stuff with curiosity. My young English friend might no more want to be caught with a book of Trollope's than with a book of etiquette. Worse yet, there Trollope is, a civil servant—a civil servant in the post office, no less—embarrassingly preoccupied with dukes. How can we cheery egalitarians admit we share any such fascination? And what is absolutely beyond bearing, Trollope is always talking about race, birth, blood, breeding.

Actually, Trollope is much too complex to repel us on any such grounds. For one thing, he is a liberal, and not just a Liberal. In *The Warden*, Mr. Harding's salary is what tradition has evolved it to be, but he cannot justify it to himself, since it comes from a fund meant to benefit his wards. Trollope sees when the customary is questionable. He sees that some English prejudices, or settled English ways, are bad or silly. To be sure, Trollope loves the old ways and on the whole would not change them. Mr. Harding's salary in fact should not be much less than it is, and his wards could not profit from a shilling more than is allotted to them. When Mr. Harding does resign, the effect is only to leave his elderly wards without the nearness of a friend who has been necessary to them. In Trollope—let's face it—change is almost always for the worse. But Trollope can also laugh at the old ways. In *Barchester Towers* he gives us the relentlessly retro Miss Thorne of Ullathorne, the squire's maiden sister. Miss Thorne expects party guests to join in a jolly medieval game that involves getting

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dusted by sacks of flour. She is miffed when nobody will play.

Trollope does have pride of race. The blond English lad is Trollope's curled darling. But there are dark, Frenchy sorts of women in Trollope, some of whom turn out to be English, like Lizzie Eustace and *Barchester Towers*'s Signora Neroni; some to be quite nice, like Marie Melmotte (*The Way We Live Now*); and one even to be superb—Madame Max Goesler, of the parliamentary novels. And Trollope thinks the unthinkable and lets education trump blood, even marry blood. In *Doctor Thorne,* incredibly, he offers us as a romantic heroine a girl who, however ladylike, is a lowborn illegitimate. In *The Duke's Children,* Plantaganet Palliser, that greatest Trollope Liberal of them all, winds up having to give each of his children in marriage to a very nice person he spends much of the book excluding as impossible.

We come to see that the idea of the English gentleman so cherished by Trollope is not the preoccupation of a snob but rather of a sly leveler. In book after book, his characters argue in favor of their friends and lovers of lesser birth, or rank, or station: "If he is a gentleman [or she is a lady], what difference can it make?" In the end, Trollope's is a genial and tolerant pen.

So it should be all right to read him. But that brings me to my other question: What is good about him? Why is he always in print? Why at this moment are there people all over the world tucked up cozily with him? Of course we read Trollope, as we do Jane Austen, for social comedy. Trollope is so good at it. But there is more to Trollope than there is to Austen. I don't mean he is greater, only that he is bigger.

Trollope's world is more masculine and dynamic and scary than Austen's. This is a world of stockjobbing and newfangled railways, changing administrations, reform bills, and distrust of the established clergy. Trollope tells love stories just as Austen does, but his people are under a lot of pressure. And Trollope is a realist. A Trollope man who is financially pressed—and they almost always are—will not invariably vanish, as he would in Jane Austen or Henry James, into some remote colony or office to see what can be done. Some Trollope men make real deals about phony railways, have real phony directors' meetings, and in painful scenes physically borrow money from surprisingly gullible people in the City.

Henry James once said that everything happens at dinner parties. In Jane Austen, things happen also at balls and picnics and in the front parlor. Now, I think you will permit me to say that these are rather feminine settings. But things happen in Trollope also at men's clubs—both of the right sort (the Reform), and the wrong sort (who can forget the Beargarden?); in dusty rooms in the City and in the Inns of Court; in bachelors' digs; and in the House of Commons.

And think of his cast of characters. In Trollope, Jane Austen's pretentious middle-class sojourners in Bath, and her blood-proud baronets, are joined by commercial travelers selling awful metal furniture, world-class swindler financiers, powerful demagogic journalists, and members of Her Majesty's government. I have to acknowledge that even in the better books Trollope gives us some really boring heroines—good and wise ones. But he also gives us an impressive range of interesting women. There is the hoyden Viola Effingham who enters the parliamentary books in *Phineas Finn.* There is spunky, naïvely shrewd Lizzie Eustace, and independent Lady Carbury in *The Way We Live Now.* There is ambitious Lady Laura who loves Phineas; and the overbearing Mrs. Proudie, the true Bishop of Barchester. And then there is sexy Signora Neroni: In *Barchester Towers,* Trollope describes Neroni as emitting a sort of "incense" that would make a man standing close to her want to touch her. There are the wise and worldly and wonderfully mature women, like Madame Max, and the wonderfully unworldly and unwise and never mature women, like Lady Glen.

All these people have a reality to them. In Trollope, as he intended, there are few out-and-out villains and few out-and-out saints. When the curtain opens on *Barchester Towers,* Archdeacon Grantly is waiting, with a son's true love and grief and reverence, for the death of his father, the bishop. And yet at the same time he is hoping his father will hurry up and die. If the government goes out before his father dies, Grantly will lose his chance to be appointed to the bishopric. Trollope makes us forgive and even sympathize with Grantly's very human worldly ambition, and he makes us believe just the same in Grantly's love and grief and reverence.

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Think of Lady Carbury in *The Way We Live Now*, scheming for favorable reviews of her pastiche of a book, *Criminal Queens*. She has three editors at her feet; she is ready to give . . . not quite her all. And she charms them, and us, utterly. After all, Trollope was his mother's son. Frances Trollope lived by her pen. Her acerbic portrait of us, *The Domestic Manners of the Americans*, is still read. Trollope knows that independent women of modest talents must make their way, and he can make us admire as well as smile at the courage of their little schemes.

Recently a friend asked me a fascinating question. What would Trollope have done with the story, then much in the news, of Zoë Baird's failed nomination as attorney general in the new Clinton administration? What would Trollope have made of Baird's supposed "violation" of the immigration laws she was to enforce? Trollope, I think, would have let her life go smash, and would have secured a triumph for the muckrakers of the *Jupiter*—his fictional embodiment of *The Times*—very much like their triumph in *The Warden*. But the reader would understand that Trollope regarded the noisy undoing of Zoë Baird as moralistic and absurd, quite as he did that of the warden. In *Doctor Thorne*, an incidental character, Mr. Romer, a barrister, is working for the conservative interest in a county election. A beery publican with power to deliver votes complains to Mr. Romer that after the last election his bill, presumably for beer, was not paid. Romer points out that payment was withheld because the bill was disputed, but the publican cannot be budged. "A man likes to be paid his little bill." Romer then good-naturedly pays the bill. That is all very well, but when the conservatives win, the liberals discover Romer's accommodation to the publican, and the *Jupiter* thunders forth that Romer has bought the election. A life in England becomes impossible for Romer, and friends find him something in Hong Kong. Worse, parliamentary zealots then have him recalled from Hong Kong to face utter disgrace and destruction. This although, as Trollope points out, all members were then sitting in seats it had cost them this kind of money, and much more, to win and retain. Mr. Romer's story is rather like Mr. Harding's in *The Warden*. So I think Trollope would ruin his Zoë Baird, but he would not be on the side of her triumphant destroyers.

I might be wrong about this. In *Orley Farm*, Lady Mason makes her misstep, a more serious one than Baird's, for the good of her children, and in true justice to her children. She is acquitted in a court of law. But Trollope finds the legal process a despicable sham; and notwithstanding her acquittal, and the fact that Trollope likes and sympathizes with her, he makes her do terrible penance. Far from finding absurd and moralistic the sacrifices she demands of herself, Trollope sorrowfully judges them necessary. But Trollope, the pained moralist of *Orley Farm*, seems to me less convincing and less himself than Trollope, the wry skeptic about the fates of Harding and Romer.

Trollope has bigness of scale. His characters develop over long arcs of time, over big books, over a half-dozen or a dozen books, in their tangled interrelations, back to the grandparents. To grasp the bigness of his conception, you need to see that "the Barsetshire" novels and "the parliamentary" novels are not the two separate boxed sets in which we now can find them. They are much more of a whole than that. The Barsetshire clerical books become parliamentary, and the parliamentary novels wind in and out of Barsetshire. It is in Barsetshire that the alcoholic railway magnate, Scatcherd, stands for Parliament. That shy hero, or unhero, of the parliamentary books, Plantaganet Palliser, meets his first love in a Barsetshire book, *The Small House at Allington*—the pre-Glencora love only hinted at in the parliamentary books. The Duke of Omnium, that exclusive old debauchee, presides at Gatherum Castle in both series, in *Doctor Thorne* as he does in *Phineas Finn*, and even outside the two series, in *The Way We Live Now*.

The development of these people can be slapdash. Trollope occasionally kills one off between books, just to clear the slot for a new character. And the books are not truly serial books. The characters wander into the next book, but now it is somebody else's story. Trollope keeps track of scores of them. Even within the narrower confines of a single book, one senses the massiveness of the intellect that could have created and controlled such worlds within worlds. This is not just social comedy; it is the human comedy.

Sometimes the effect can be uncanny. In *The Small House at Allington*, when we first hear of Lady Glencora, the news is only that Plantaganet Palliser is engaged to her. And when

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we first meet her in *Can You Forgive Her?*, she is not the title heroine; she is only an incidental character. But suddenly Trollope greets her as an old friend. He conveys the impression of old affection for her, as though the whole of her story in the five later books in which she will appear is substantially familiar to him before he has written them down. Your hair stands on end when Trollope says this first hello to Lady Glen, very like the way it does when the French horn greets Clara in the last movement of Brahms's First.

Except for *The Warden*, a perfect gem, these are not tidy, well-arranged little books. But when Trollope tells you frankly at the start that the heroine will marry the hero, he is rightly confident that you will enjoy reading him anyway. In these capacious, messy books there is room for all sorts of good things, most especially that characteristic Trollope set piece, the fox hunt. A great hunting scene is somewhere in the middle of most of Trollope's books, the best of them in the parliamentary novels. A good deal happens in a Trollope hunt. The story moves, the characters' lives change, and yet you feel you have been out hunting. I do not mean only that you step into the Constable-ish English landscapes Trollope fills in so deftly, although you do. There is the progress of a Trollope hunt, from the time one loiters about on horses waiting for something to happen (what happens is usually lunch, on horseback), to the time the fox is found and you stick as close as you can to the master of the hounds and ride away into danger. The field is crowded. There are the yelping dogs. There are the hangers-on and ne'er-do-wells, and also the big men of the county, and the downright women who know what they're about, and the wise sportsmen who know when a horse must not be allowed to jump a fence, and the bounders who take shortcuts and get in at the kill without having ridden at danger at all. These fox hunts are among the jewels of English literature.

Trollope's characteristic method is to open to you, between pages thick with dialogue full of irony and tension, the great masterly internal monologues of his characters. He is interested in what people will do in a given situation; his particular way—open a page at random and there it is—is to log on to the character's internal argument, to enter the consciousness of the character and review the situation from that character's point of view. The situation is usually nerve-racking; this is why I think the question about Zoë Baird was so apropos. In *The Way We Live Now*, Melmotte's dinner for the emperor of China happens in page upon page of hilarious dialogue; and then Melmotte, near the end of his rope, has a brooding, resentful, self-deluding yet self-knowing internal monologue as he surveys the scene and contemplates his future. This is vintage Trollope.

Elegant twists in the plot transmute the characters' respective apprehensions and analyses. In Zoë Baird's story, Trollope would have given us her internal monologue on whether to come forward for the cabinet post; again, on whether to reveal a peccadillo to Clinton's people; again, on whether to withdraw. In *Mr. Scarborough's Family*, or *The Eustace Diamonds*, you see Trollope brilliantly ringing the changes on the effects on his characters' internal lives of Scarborough's shifting testamentary dispositions, or of the shifting whereabouts of the Eustace diamonds. The characters argue with themselves about how it all has come about, and about their options. They yield, or do not yield, to their weaknesses; they rationalize or reject rationalizations. When the characters speak or write a letter, any of these internal strands may motivate what they say, and so their human inconsistency from moment to moment is an open book to the reader. Some of the best scenes in Trollope are those in which the characters, in their nerve-racking situations, meet and clash and reveal themselves, if not to each other, then to us. As his manipulative old Mr. Scarborough likes to gloat, "It is as good as a play."

So here I am, once again in thrall to Trollope. There is a little bit of sadness in setting out to re-read him, because sooner or later he will be used up. Even good things come to an end. But it is heartening to me to remember that, with this most generous of authors, the end is a long way off.

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A Work of Spinning

(for T. N. R.)

RITA RAINSFORD ROUNER

Under the soft sky of another summer
on this northern coast
the thread was begun,
while sea fog drifted through the spruce tops
and wild roses smoldered on the point.
Secret spinning
in the dark hollow
between bones shaped
to cradle life,
like the inner curve of a shell.

Nine times the moon increased and withered,
the cold came on . . . withdrew,
while the thread swelled
to a blue-veined cord
throbbing between worlds,
connecting what was coming
to what had gone before,
a warm lush cable
humming with messages between us.

I remember this season and this place.
I remember the wonder of my body
enfolding your body,
my new astounding skill
to spin your unknown substance
from my own,
to fashion without thought or effort
the connecting cord.

At the appointed moment
the blue rope was discarded.

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Together then we spun another,
just as strong
but looser, longer,
devised with deft movements of
holding and letting go,
weaving the countless ways we found
of touching:
first your small fingers tucked in mine,
later your strong hands
taking up tools to clear a trail
to the hilltop behind the house,
leading me
to view the mountain.

For nineteen summers we spun
until, at another moment
perhaps likewise appointed,
on a mountain far from me
another blue rope coiled unavailing
on your brother's shoulder,
you were ripped from all moorings
and flung out
into vast spaces
beyond reach of any line.

Now I begin again
under a brightening sky
where the cold sea stirs
and presses against granite,
a new spinning,
solitary, austere,
no more the spontaneous work of flesh

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but slow deliberation of the spirit.
I gather up untried strands
to weave once more an unknown substance
out of new touchings,
trails to other viewpoints.
I remember
how we spun together
and wonder if you too
are twisting to a shining length
some starry fabric
you have now discovered
to toss to me
as I work on alone.

✪ RITA RAINSFORD ROUNER, a pastoral counselor, has published poetry in *Climbing* and *Appalachia.*

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Remembrance of America Past

ANN M. BEGLEY

The Works of Willa Cather. Volume 1: EARLY NOVELS AND STORIES. *$27.50.* Volume 2: LATER NOVELS. *$32.50*. Volume 3: STORIES, POEMS, AND OTHER WRITINGS. *$35. Edited by Sharon O'Brien. Library of America.*

The many prizes and honors awarded a writer may become meaningless in the course of history. Time often alters our view of a body of work. The trumpets of fame that once blew loud and clear may be muted, perhaps only to start up again years later. And the public, which often, but not always, slavishly follows the edicts of those who make literary judgments, sometimes turns its back, with a shrug, on the dictates of critics.

Despite the fact that Willa Cather—recipient of the Pulitzer Prize, the Prix Fémina, and the gold medal for fiction awarded by the National Institute of Arts and Letters—has been memorialized as an American classic, she has from time to time, since her death in New York City in 1947, bordered on being relegated to minor literary status. When she has been included in major surveys of modern American literature, it is often as a regional novelist whose work is no longer thought to be germane to the mainstream of American fiction. She suffers, it has been said, from an image problem: Her name tends to evoke pictures of endless, wild, drab midwestern prairies "as bare as a piece of sheet iron."

Willa Cather was born in Virginia in 1873; when she was nine years old her family moved to the high plains region in Nebraska known as the Divide—the vast, empty, flat prairie with isolated farms and sod houses, where the Cathers lived for a year and a half before moving for good to the little town of Red Cloud. It was this frontier territory and the fortitude of the immigrant homesteaders and their wives who settled there and finally triumphed over the initially unyielding soil that Cather celebrated in some of her fiction—notably in *O Pioneers!* (1913) and *My Ántonia* (1918). The variety of cultures that surrounded her as she grew up—Scandinavian, French, German, Russian, and Czech—quickened her interest and sympathy and, later, her imagination. Many and various are the stories she wrote of the heroic endurance of these newcomers in their struggle to wrest a living from a land indifferent to their efforts, of the conflict in their desire to adapt to the American way while retaining the customs of the old country, of the cultural limitations of frontier life and the tension between material and artistic pursuits.

Willa Cather's narratives take place in a wide variety of locales from Pittsburgh, Boston, and London to Lake Michigan, colonial Quebec, or pre–Civil War Virginia, among others, for she was determined to escape an overly close identification with the West. Yet it is probably for her stories of rural Nebraska and the vast, craggy, windswept country of the Southwest—Cather territory—that she is primarily remembered and sometimes summarily dismissed. Even though her characters, the mainspring of fiction, stand out in striking contrast to the cardboard quality of most fictive figures representing the West, her reputation has suffered from the assumption that she is nothing more than an elegist of the Ameri-

✪ ANN M. BEGLEY's studies of Simone Weil and Marguerite Yourcenar have been published in *European Writers: The Twentieth Century.*

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can past, a local colorist—especially by those who favor fiction that reflects the current scene or presents a thesis with politically correct overtones. Her disapproval of change and her protest against virtually all things modern have caused some to conclude that her works are alien to contemporary society, no longer relevant to our time.

Recent biographers and critics have manifested a renewed surge of interest in Willa Cather as an important writer with a wide range of psychological, social, literary, and metaphysical themes—including Sharon O'Brien, the editor of the Library of America's fine three-volume, annotated collection of Cather's works from her early experiments to her mature, polished writing. This is the most comprehensive edition to date, comprising a dozen novels, a book of poems, four collections of short fiction, a collection of essays, short stories that had not been collected by Cather in book form, as well as selected reviews and essays. However, since Cather revised virtually all of her important works—in some cases, extensively—and the Library of America, for the most part, has printed only the original versions, some readers, certainly scholars, will want to consult the definitive critical editions that the University of Nebraska Press has begun to publish.

Feminist critics, concerned with the role of gender in literature, tend to concentrate on Cather's compelling female characters who, in a literature traditionally dominated by men, are, they assert, free of the usual masculine definition. To her credit, Cather's aesthetic theory was not informed by sexual preference or prejudice of any kind. Her male figures are as convincing and as sympathetic as their female counterparts. Virginia Woolf contended that one could not possibly mistake a novel written by a man for one written by a woman: "Each sex describes itself." Yet this is clearly not the case in Cather's work, where she is completely androgynous. Hemingway, however, seemingly supported Woolf's contention, as his derisive, and now famous, comment to Edmund Wilson on the astonishingly authentic scenes of World War I military action in the Pulitzer Prize-winning *One of Ours* (1922) indicates: "Do you know where it came from? The battle scene in *Birth of a Nation.* I identified episode after episode, Catherized. Poor woman she had to get her war experience somewhere."

While Willa Cather never took up literary cudgels in defense of feminist causes, she did assert her right to move in the predominantly male world of artistic productivity. In much the same way that George Sand donned masculine attire to express her resentment and rebellion against the traditional constraints placed on female writers, Cather, from age fourteen through her first two years at the University of Nebraska, cropped her hair short, wore the clothes of a young man, and called herself William, Will, or Willie. (Named Wilella at birth, she was often called Willie by her family; she created the name Willa for herself as she matured.) It has been suggested that this adoption of a masculine persona was not only a gesture of defiance against the cultural limitations imposed on women—as it undoubtedly was—but also a manifestation of a sexual orientation. There is no revelation of such in her fiction.

In any case, Cather was convinced that, for an artist, the single life is preferable; marriage means commitment, and the commitment of writers should be solely to their art. Thea, the central character of *The Song of the Lark* (1915) comments, "Your work becomes your personal life." And, to a large extent, this was the philosophy of her creator. Artists, declared Cather, must love their art above all things and must give to it the same promise Ruth gave: "Where thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge . . . thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God . . . married nightingales seldom sing."

"What was any art," Thea further muses, "but the effort to make a sheath, a mould in which to imprison for a moment the shining, elusive element which is life itself—life hurrying past us and running away, too strong to stop, too sweet to lose?" Cather expressed her conception of art in terms of marital and religious codes:

> The further the world advances the more it becomes evident that an author's only safe course is to cling to the skirts of his art, forsaking all others, and keep unto her as long as they two shall live. An artist should not be vexed by human hobbies or human follies: he should be able to lift himself into the clear firmament of creation where the world is not. He should be among men but not of them, in the world but not of the world. Other men may think and believe and argue, but he must create.

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"Religion and art," Cather observed, "spring from the same root and are close kin."

Upon graduating from the university, where she demonstrated a marked talent for journalism and creative writing, Willa Cather wrote for various newspapers and magazines, primarily as a book and drama reviewer. Then, after teaching high school Latin and English in Pittsburgh for nearly half a decade, she joined the staff of *McClure's*, a national magazine based in New York, on which she eventually became managing editor. To her Pittsburgh years belong the poems that were incorporated in her first book—*April Twilights* (1903), a volume that aroused little interest—and the seven stories collected in *The Troll Garden* (1905).

These tales, four of which were later reprinted in *Youth and the Bright Medusa* (1920), deal largely with the lives of artists and musicians, underscoring the destructive force of philistinism—a recurring motif in Cather's writings. Among them is the much-anthologized "Paul's Case," which explores the psychological and social ramifications of a rebellious, neurotic youth's brief escape from the "ugliness and commonness" of his life into a realm of art, romance, and glamour. Negative portraits of frontier life are presented in "The Sculptor's Funeral" and "A Wagner Matinée." In the latter, a longtime resident of Nebraska, attending a concert in Boston, is enthralled by the music she loves and of which she has been deprived for so many years. Tormented by the thought of having to return to a world of artistic alienation, she is reluctant to leave the concert hall: "For her, just outside the door . . . lay the black pond with the cattle-tracked bluffs; the tall, unpainted house, with weather-curled boards; naked as a tower, the crook-backed ash seedlings where the dish-cloths hung to dry; the gaunt, moulting turkeys picking up refuse about the kitchen door."

The theme is taken up again at length, with some variations, in *The Song of the Lark*, the portrait of an artist, the daughter of an immigrant, who manages to leave a narrow provincial town in Colorado for "a life of disciplined endeavor" to become an internationally famous singer—whose professional career is modeled on that of Olive Fremstad, the then-reigning Wagnerian soprano at the Metropolitan Opera. The novel reveals the author's wealth of musical knowledge and her passion for music. Her goal was "to reproduce the emotional effect of one art through the medium of another art."

The observation has repeatedly been made, with considerable justification, that *Alexander's Bridge* (1912) is heavily indebted to Henry James both in form and in choice of an upper-class, cosmopolitan milieu, but it is even more indebted to Carl Jung—as is much of Willa Cather's later work. This, Cather's first novel, has been variously called "a study in split or divided personality" as well as "an exploration of the lost or undiscovered self." That it is a psychological portraiture is clear.

Bartley Alexander, a highly successful engineer, married to a Boston heiress, comes to the realization in mid-life that the goals he had set for himself, and eventually attained, do not bring him the fulfillment he had anticipated. To realize his ambitions, he had repressed the feelings of his youth, feelings that included his love for an Irish actress. Over the years, along with his numerous bridges, he had built for himself a "social structure" that does not represent the whole man. His total identification with this persona—he doesn't "care a rap about"—amounts to a denial of the "broad belt of unconsciousness," to use Jung's words, that lies hidden below the surface, immune to conscious criticism and control. Here complexes reside and act like a partial personality, often in a way diametrically opposed to the mainstream of consciousness.

Vaguely Alexander senses within himself "something besides the strong work-horse that his profession had made of him." "I sometimes wonder," he reflects, "what sort of chap I'd have been if I hadn't been this sort; I want to go and live out his potentialities, too." On a trip to London, he meets the actress of his youth and renews his liaison with her.

Within everyone, Jung says, there is a striving for integration of the conscious and unconscious, for the assimilation of the ego into a wider personality that he terms the "self." Without this process of "individuation," the individual will not be a psychological "whole," and life will be lived inadequately. In an effort to free the individual from the limitations of a purely ego-conscious outlook, Jung explains, the unconscious may act negatively, though not necessarily in a nefarious manner. "The more dazzling the front" Alexander presents and the higher his "facade" rises, the closer his

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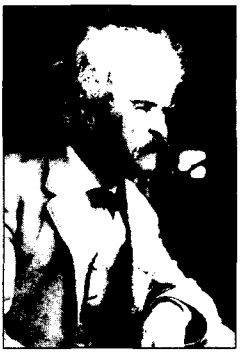

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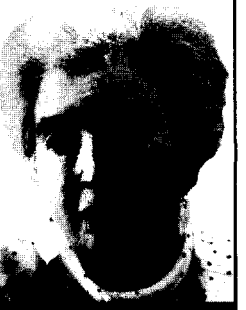

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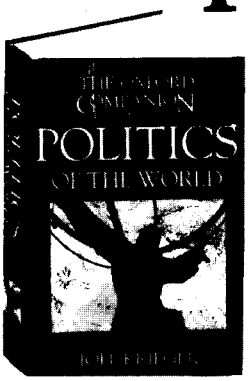

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psyche comes to cracking—"zigzagging from top to bottom."

Jung sometimes represents the unconscious as a shadow, and he speaks of the unusual autoscopic phenomenon whereby an individual sees himself outside himself (doubleganger, Doppelgänger). Alexander, we are told, "walked shoulder to shoulder with a shadowy companion . . . his own young self . . . the most dangerous of companions." The emerging, repressed fragment of Alexander's personality initially delights him, but eventually proves to be threatening to his conscious ego: In a letter to his Irish lover, he confides that he feels as if a second man has been grafted into him, "strong and sullen . . . fighting for his life at the cost of mine." His one desire is "to grow strong. No creature ever wanted so much to live. Eventually, I suppose, he will want to absorb me altogether."

Similarly, the protagonist of *The Professor's House* (1925), eminent professor and author of an award-winning history of the Southwest, "the personality his friends knew," encounters in his dreams the boy he had been in his youth—the boy he had left behind him in Kansas, "the original, unmodified Godfrey St. Peter." This Kansas boy, totally forgotten after St. Peter's marriage, nevertheless forces on the professor's consciousness an awareness that his career, his wife, his family "were not his life at all, but a chain of events which had happened to him." "The design of his life had been the work of this secondary social man," and now, as a result, he must learn to "live without delight."

It is significant that in a letter to Dorothy Canfield, Willa Cather wrote: "I have been running away from myself all my life." This motif of the persona that does not represent the whole person is pervasive in her fiction. In *Lucy Gayheart* (1935), Pauline was "always walking behind herself. The plump, talkative little woman one met on the way to choir practice, or afternoon teas, was a mannikin which Pauline pushed along before her; no one had ever seen the pusher behind that familiar figure, and no one knew what that second person was like." Thea (*The Song of the Lark*) feels within her a "sturdy little companion" and, wondering if others have the same experience, asks: "What if one's second self could somehow speak to all those second selves? . . . How deep they lay, those second persons and how little one knew about them." And Claude (*One of Ours*) is convinced that "inside of people who walked and worked in the broad sun, there were captives dwelling in darkness—never seen from birth to death . . . with their unappeased longings and futile dreams."

After the publication of *Alexander's Bridge*, Cather left *McClure's* to devote herself entirely to her craft. She had gradually come to the conclusion that an artist "must learn to distinguish what is his *own* from what he admires." It was only when she finally turned away from her imitative early fiction to bring the Muse into her own country, to pursue memories of her Nebraska past—not simply as historical events but as revelations of universal truths—that her years of apprenticeship ended and her work took on the voice and sophisticated quality that is peculiarly hers.

Despite the strong condemnation of one New York critic ("I simply don't care a damn what happens in Nebraska, no matter who writes about it"), national recognition came to Cather with the publication of *O Pioneers!* The book offers a portrayal of Alexandra, a Swedish immigrant, who suppresses her need of personal satisfaction for love of the land. "Her personal life," the narrator relates, "her own realization of herself, was almost a subconscious existence; like an underground river that came to the surface only here and there, at intervals months apart, and then sank again to flow on under her own fields." Her youth and natural yearning for human love, which she had pushed down below the conscious surface, rise again and again in recurrent dreams, where she has the "illusion of being lifted up bodily and carried lightly by some one very strong. It was a man, certainly, who carried her, but he was like no man she knew . . . he carried her as easily as if she were a sheaf of wheat." To her, he seemed to be "yellow like the sunlight, and there was the smell of ripe cornfields about him." It is in her dreams, a psychic process beyond the control of the conscious mind, that human love and love of the land interact and fuse.

Jung's theory of the collective unconscious also has salient application to Cather's work. In addition to containing repressed or forgotten events personally experienced, the unconscious, according to Jung, holds collective contents as well, peculiar to an entire people, a particular society, or mankind in general.

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However deeply buried in the unconscious the memories of an individual's past may be, there are profounder memories still of one's cultural heritage; hence it is conceivable that all minds have a common substratum. After being out all night in a storm, Alexandra remarks to her friend that the feeling of the penetratingly cold rain carried her back into the dark, before her birth, where "you can't see things, but they come to you, somehow, and you know them and aren't afraid of them. Maybe it's like that with the dead. If they feel anything at all, it's the old things, before they were born."

Like Alexandra, Thea (*The Song of the Lark*) refers to a soul that dreamed something "in the dark before it was born; a soul . . . under the cloud of a past it could not recall." And, in some arcane way, the desert presents mirages of lakes that reflect images of magnified cattle resembling "prehistoric beasts standing solitary in the waters that for many thousands of years actually washed over that desert: the mirage itself may be the ghost of that long-vanished sea." In the ruins of the cliff dwellings of "the Ancient People," Thea discovers—as her creator did before her while vacationing in the Southwest—artifacts of a past going "back into the dark," a past unknown and at the same time remembered as something ancestral.

In striking contrast to the grim picture of Nebraska depicted in "A Wagner Matinée" and "The Sculptor's Funeral" is the sympathetic view of prairie life in *My Ántonia.* Even here, however, the portrayal of frontier life is never idyllic. Although the narrator lives in a house, Ántonia's family makes its home in a cave in a clay bank—the children sleeping in low, narrow tunnels in the gumbo mud—where life is so desperate and disordered that Ántonia's father, a sensitive musician, prefers to shoot himself rather than continue to live like an animal. There are nevertheless a number of poetic passages manifesting the author's regional affection and pride in the courage and grit of the pioneers who, at great cost, subdued this wild land. It appears that Cather, after living in New York for more than twelve years and being firmly established professionally, was finally able to look back on her country from both a temporal and physical distance with nostalgia, appreciation, and love.

Cather's English publisher had rejected *The Song of the Lark,* advising her that "the full-blooded method, which told everything about everybody" was wrong for her; the higher processes of art, he insisted, are the processes of simplification. Eventually she decided he was right, and her later novels reveal the ideal she set for her fiction: character and setting stripped of all but the essentials. In her well-known essay "The Novel Démeublé," she states that the basic principle of a writer's craft should be selectivity. All art must simplify. Novelists should make every effort to get rid of the furniture—excess language, conventions of form, and dramatic action—while preserving "the spirit of the whole." Too much detail, she writes elsewhere, like any form of extravagance, is apt to be slightly vulgar. She applauds those creative writers who break away from "mere verisimilitude" to interpret, as modern painters do, to present scenes by suggestion rather than by enumeration, so that they are "felt upon the page without being specifically named there." A laboratory study of bodily organs under sensory stimuli ends by dehumanizing characters. "Can one imagine anything more terrible," she asks, "than the story of *Romeo and Juliet* rewritten in prose by D. H. Lawrence?"

A Lost Lady (1923), one of the first of her novels to be "démeublé," though written with severe economy, abounds with symbolic images that reverberate with "suggestion." The book is traditionally read as Cather's most explicit treatment of a theme that pervades much of her work: the contrast between the nobility, dignity, and heroic idealism of the frontier spirit—a dying way of life—and the crass materialism of the acquisitive generations that succeeded it. The decline of the pioneering ideals reflects the social and moral degeneration of the protagonist. In that it is a story of adultery set in a provincial, bourgeois town, the novel has often been compared to the French prototype, *Madame Bovary.* And the portrayal of the young boy who idolizes "the lost lady" has engendered a comparison with *Sentimental Education.* In both plot and symbolic details, Flaubert's influence is clear.

For many—Henry James comes immediately to mind—the Old World stands for culture, ancient and rich, while the New is identified with modernity and an impoverished heritage. Cather, on the other hand, defends the thesis, one that our brethren across the Atlantic are not wont to subscribe to, that there is a cultural and spiritual profundity in America—evi-

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denced by the continuous enrichment received from the variety of peoples who have immigrated to the New World and planted there the seeds of their aesthetic and moral sense, the original Indian inhabitants whose past is unfathomable, and the metaphysical yearnings that are common to all men.

Death Comes for the Archbishop (1927) is a portrait of the Southwest, which includes the story of a French missionary of the nineteenth century, the intelligent and refined first bishop of the newly annexed territory of New Mexico, from whose perspective the reader views the local landscape and people. Continuity of culture is exemplified by the bell that sounds the Angelus, whose exotic history is traced from the Moors to the Spaniards, the Mexicans, and finally the Navajos; and also by the soup that Bishop Latour's clerical assistant has prepared for their supper: "A soup like this is not the work of one man. It is the result of a constantly refined tradition. There are nearly a thousand years of history in this soup."

Recognizing the universality of human longing, Latour meditates on the wooden doll representing the mother of Christ, which, carved two centuries before, is still being dressed and decorated by pious Mexicans. "Raphael and Titian had made costumes for Her in their time," he reflects, "and the great masters had made music for Her, and the architects had built cathedrals for Her. Long before Her years on earth, in the long twilight between the Fall and the Redemption, the pagan sculptors were always trying to achieve the image of a goddess who should yet be a woman." The bishop marvels that the Ácoma Indians made their home on the top of a rock hundreds of feet in the air, without soil or water. The cliff dwellings assured them of a haven away from the marauding Apaches and Navajos, but they were also a response to "the universal human yearning for something permanent, enduring, without shadow of change." By continually juxtaposing Christian rites and symbolism with the mysterious pagan ritual of the Indians, Cather underlines the basic human need for adoration of an Infinite Being, however he may be perceived.

Over the years, Willa Cather repeatedly experimented with narrative form, subordinating plot more and more to characterization and an attempt to capture a feeling—permitting the "inherent vigor" of theme to dominate and, together with the characters, to shape the structure of the novel. She increasingly used a device the French have favored: that of inserting vignettes, fables, or legends into the central story. As in her collections of short fiction, where the various pieces support a major theme, each inset tale—complete in itself—is integrated into the larger work for a cumulative effect.

In *Death Comes to the Archbishop* there is no conventional plot, no traditional causal relationship between events. Although the book is carefully researched, historical facts are treated somewhat superficially; it is evident that the author's primary interest is in the legends, anecdotes, superstitions, and customs of the country. Inspired by Puvis de Chavannes's frescoes of Saint Geneviève, Cather's objective was to emulate the paintings in prose form—to produce "something without accent, with none of the artificial elements of composition." Her achievement has been described as a mosaic of images, scenes, and events. The flashback had always been one of her favorite structural devices; here, there is a general tendency to dispense with linear time. Frustrated reviewers protested that it wasn't a novel at all, that it was difficult to classify. The author's response was: "Then why bother?" She preferred to call it a narrative.

Shadows on the Rock (1931), even more episodic in structure than *Death Comes to the Archbishop*, is set almost exclusively in Quebec, "a crag where for some reason human beings built themselves nests . . . and held fast." Although its time frame is the seventeenth century and one of the characters is Count Frontenac, Cather refused to think of the book as a historical novel. It is the exploration of a culture transplanted from France to the very different soil of the New World. The author attempted to express the mood and viewpoint in the title. To her, the rock of Quebec is "not only a stronghold on which many strange figures have for a little time cast a shadow in the sun; it is the curious endurance of a kind of culture, narrow but definite." She tried to develop, she explained, "a series of pictures remembered rather than experienced . . . a mental complexion inherited, left over from the past."

For her last novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940), an examination of the complex social environment of a slave plantation in Virginia

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just before the Civil War, Cather relied heavily on old family tales and her earliest childhood memories. Structurally, it is a return to the conventional dramatic story that she had abandoned. Whereas she had historically employed various techniques to distance herself, as author, from the narrator, in the epilogue, switching from third- to first-person narrative, Cather—as the child that she had been before moving to Nebraska—brings the story to its conclusion with the recollection of an incident she had witnessed. In this way, she turns the end of the fictional narrative into a memoir.

Although the influence of Proust is nowhere discernible in her oeuvre, Willa Cather was engaged in remembrance of things past as well as in search of lost time. Her work, to some extent the result of historical research, is largely owing not only to a recall—and subsequent amendment by the imagination—of people, places, and events that had "teased the mind" for many years, but also, perhaps, to a resurgence of more profound memories from the layered complexity of the unconscious working through this extraordinary American artist.

Uncle Wallace & Uncle Bob

TOWARD ROBERT FROST: THE READER AND THE POET. *By Judith Oster. University of Georgia Press. $45.*

STEVENS AND THE INTERPERSONAL. *By Mark Halliday. Princeton University Press. $29.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Who these days reads close readers closely? Of what use or interest is another book on poets who have been as much written about as Robert Frost or Wallace Stevens? Who can benefit from another mind saying things that, if we're at all practiced in the trade of criticizing poems, we should be able to say for ourselves? When I, as a young teacher, presented for the first time a course in some modern poets (Yeats, Eliot, Frost, Stevens), I scoured the latest books and articles about their work; as the years passed, I found that keeping up with the latest secondary material was less essential. No doubt this had something to do with more attractive books that were competing for my attention. But it's also probably endemic to the profession: too many academic studies rehearsing what one more or less already knew; too many special approaches that feel inessential or are written in a rebarbative style.

Two recent books on the poetry of Frost and the poetry of Stevens belong to a different order of usefulness. Each is written by a critic thoroughly immersed in the poems of his or her respective subject. Each is clearly the product of many classroom hours spent talking to and arguing with students about those poems. Neither is enslaved to a particular theoretical scheme, although Judith Oster has read a lot of reader-response criticism (more on that later) and Mark Halliday (a good poet himself) has obviously thought a lot about what's involved in writing a poem. Both critics believe that the important thing about Frost's and Stevens's poetry is how it gets read, and they aim to encourage ways of reading that will result in stronger, livelier responses to the poems.

Judith Oster is candid about why she values Frost and how important he is to her as a reader and a teacher. She regularly begins (as do I) courses in poetry with examples from Frost, since their "indeterminacy and open-endedness" prove salutary to students whose notions of the art may be somewhat more static. The critics of Frost who have been most useful to her are Reuben Brower, Richard Poirier, and Frank Lentricchia, especially Poirier in his insistence that we actively engage in the poem's performance. In that spirit, the best parts of her book are extended accounts of the complications and satisfactions of reading and teaching such poems as "Home Burial" or "After Apple-Picking" or "The Most of It"—poems that resist "closure" (a word I'd like to see less often). I found these accounts always intelligent, always in touch with the poem's voice and changing manner, and sometimes breaking new ground. For example, I hadn't thought nearly hard enough about the syntax of Frost's great one-sentence sonnet, "The Silken Tent." It's not possible through quotation to illustrate the strength of

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Oster's commentary about that poem; suffice it to say that it consists of five closely explorative pages about this verb, that clause, the grammatical—as opposed to the logical—subject of the sentence, and related matters. This intense concern with a poem's syntax and voicing, its movement from line to line, isn't conducive to stylistic elegance, but there is a direct no-nonsense quality to Oster's registered perceptions that is admirable.

One illustration of those perceptions, from a paragraph about the opening lines of "The Most of It":

> He thought he kept the universe alone;
> For all the voice in answer he could wake
> Was but the mocking echo of his own
> From some tree-hidden cliff across the lake.
> Some morning from the boulder-broken beach
> He would cry out on life, that what it wants
> Is not its own love back in copy-speech,
> But counter-love, original response.

Oster comments:

> Mirroring is implicit in the ambiguity created by the mingling of time levels used to express the man's voicing of his cries and needs. We wonder if the whole poem is not simply an echo of a man's cries and needs, cries and needs that come out of himself and back to himself. The implication of "some morning . . . he would cry out on life" is that he has not yet done this. . . . He could have cried out but not yet cried out what he said he *would* cry out some morning, or maybe he never voiced outwardly that inner cry. . . . The sound of the words "mocking echo" is almost palindromatic. This and the confusion about whether "it" refers to life within himself or to life external to him has the effect of making this whole experience something that grows out of himself, reflects himself.

Sentences like these need to be read with the poem in front of you (or memorized so securely that you don't need the printed words), and they exemplify Oster's insistence throughout the book that we actively participate in the particular verbal performance at hand. In other words, this is a very good *teaching* book.

A few complaints: first about the concern with reader-response theory (Wolfgang Iser and Norman Holland are both evoked), which she doesn't need to make her points about Frost's work. (Maybe I've just missed the big news these theorists have for us about how reading is an interaction between reader and text, in the course of which things happen. I thought I learned that in my sophomore year in college.) Second, her book is cluttered with too many names, no disrespect to them individually, like George Bagby and P. K. Saha and Samuel Coale and Samuel Levin and "Perrine" and "Nowottney" (all these turn up within three pages); while her fifty pages of footnotes feel top-heavy and often distracting, as well as being placed at the back of the text so that one's reading is constantly interrupted. At a more trivial level she confuses Hyde Cox with Sidney Cox, misquotes in small but annoying ways ("But it was no reason *that* I had to go because they had to go"; "And to do that to birds *is* why she came"; "Can we *tell* the dancer from the dance"—the italicized words are wrong). Finally, though it's true that, as she remarks, some of Frost's best readers have been poets (Jarrell is the great case in point), James Dickey shouldn't be allowed into that company since he's declared in print: "In reality I have never been able to abide Frost's work, with its meeching self-righteousness, its attitude of sullen cringing, or a kind of triumphant skulking" (*Night Hurdling*, 1983).

Admirers of Frost's poetry are unlikely to disagree with Judith Oster's judgments of it; indeed those judgments are so wholly positive as to risk being too easily assented to just because they're uncontroversial. Mark Halliday's account of Stevens, on the other hand, if it were taken seriously by that poet's readers, would demand an answering. For Mr. Halliday, in the most delightfully unacademic piece of criticism I have read in years, believes that Stevens's poetry has had all too easy a ride; that he is too uncritically assumed by too many readers to be a great poet; and that "there are omissions and distortions in his account of human life more drastic and pervasive than the omissions that can be cited in the work of other great poets." Since I myself happen to believe this about Stevens, I looked forward to what Halliday could bring to bear on the poet by way of exploring these matters. I was not disappointed.

Halliday's charge is suggested by the book's title: that Stevens-the-poet's "profound concern for the intactness of his self, in conjunction with a profound aversion to the demands

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of interpersonal relations" result in a poetry of solitude that assumes "that the absence of distinct other persons is not only undetrimental to this good life but essentially unimportant, if not indeed beneficial." Chapters titled "Stevens and the Sufferings of Others," "Stevens and Heterosexual Love," and "Stevens and Solitude" flesh out the charge, not so much through analyses of individual poems, as by grouping and comparing them (this is done with real originality) to those of other "great" poets. Halliday thinks that only by bringing out how usually Stevens fails to register this "vast dimension of our lives"—the interpersonal—can we appreciate more truly his strangeness and individuality.

In Stevens's poem "Of Modern Poetry," he says that such a poetry "has to face the men of the time and to meet/The women of the time." How little those men and women show up in Stevens's poems, Halliday effectively demonstrates by comparing some of them with poems like Hardy's "No Buyers" and "The Harbour Bridge" or with various ones by Emily Dickinson that show a "piercing expression of the pain of separation from the beloved." By contrast to Hardy and Dickinson, Stevens, Halliday argues, "is gripped by the wish that poetry, as a way of life, can eventually smooth away all pain or at least make it thoroughly tolerable." But though Halliday finds objectionable Stevens's withdrawal from other human beings, he also finds himself frequently delighting in the poetry, and in his last and longest chapter, "Stevens and the Reader," he sets about trying to say how and why this should be so. What are the feelings involved in saying "I love Stevens," Halliday asks, answering that they come together into a sense of being "befriended" by the poet. Stevens's work carries with it "benevolence from above, from someone who is somehow better off or stronger, and who reaches out across a social gap." This seems to me convincing, a way I hadn't formulated to think about my relations with this poet.

Even more on the mark, Halliday proposes that Stevens is like a Friendly Uncle to the reader:

> an uncle who visits frequently but usually doesn't stay long, who always offers amusement and a sly, winking benevolence, though retaining too a certain dignified distance, whose life apart from his charming avuncular behavior we cannot quite imagine, an uncle who dispenses advice abundantly but cryptically, so that we learn to listen with a pleasant tentativeness, knowing that today's advice is apt to be mysteriously revised (though not rescinded) by tomorrow's.

Whatever happens, we are assured that "Uncle Wallace will always bring a curio or puzzle from his pocket." This seems to me brilliant criticism, all the more so for its total dissimilarity to the solemn, blinkered, doggedly abstract nature of what is sometimes produced by explicators of Stevens. What, for example, is a really interesting thing to say about the memorable couplet from "Esthétique du Mal"?

> Natives of poverty, children of malheur,
> The gaiety of language is our seigneur.

Halliday says it: "We do not feel depressed or alarmed by this description of our condition, despite the ostensibly regrettable 'poverty' and the ostensibly unhappy 'malheur'; we feel we are being taught the motto of a spiffy club and that the poet has proclaimed our membership in this club." All in all, a thoroughly refreshing book, not least in its pages investigating the phenomenon of post-Stevensian John Ashbery, which pages (pace Bloom, pace Vendler) thoroughly expose the fraudulence of his reputation as a significant poet. It is good to be reminded, by these very different books by Oster and Halliday, that literary criticism can still be a humanly relevant act of imagination.

Art as Understanding

METAPHYSICS AS A GUIDE TO MORALS: PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS. *By Iris Murdoch. Allen Lane/Viking Press. $35.*

Reviewed by TESS LEWIS

Situating Iris Murdoch as a philosopher places her somewhere off the coast of England, but well into Channel waters. Trained

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✪ TESS LEWIS's reviews have appeared in the *Hudson Review*, the *New Criterion*, and *Belles Lettres*.

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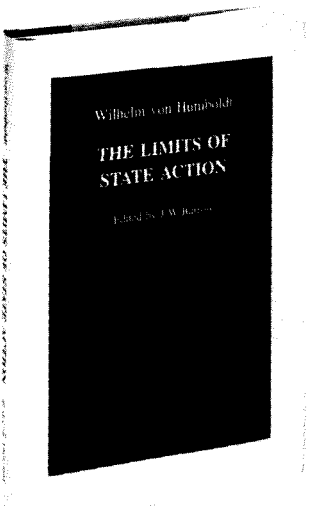

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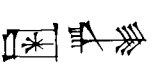

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in the analytic tradition at Cambridge and Oxford, Dame Iris was singularly open to Continental thought. As her former Oxford colleague, the linguistic philosopher Richard Hare, has said of her, having read "the big books," she "let rip on Existentialism and [used] it as a stick with which to beat 'the sterile Oxford philosophers.'" *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals,* Iris Murdoch's fifth book of philosophy, based on her 1982 Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion, is a characteristic performance: a hybrid of intuition, analysis, and philosophical history.

The question at the heart of this philosophical compendium has appeared under various fictional guises in Dame Iris's twenty-four novels: "How do the generalisations of philosophers connect with what I am doing in my day-to-day and moment-to-moment pilgrimage, how can metaphysics be a guide to morals?" Readers of her fiction will recognize how many of the philosophical alternatives and dilemmas Iris Murdoch raises in response to this query have been tested on her numerous characters as they struggle to lead as moral lives as possible, sometimes in the face of formidable odds. While Dame Iris does not offer a concise answer to this question in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals,* she does lay the groundwork for any reader who chooses to follow her aestheticized, Platonic, post-Christian approach to morality. Even readers who do not accept her metaphysical premises will enjoy her keen analyses of moral philosophy's "large impressive illuminating general conceptions," in various incarnations, among them, Plato's Eros, Kant's Duty, Schopenhauer's Will, Freud's Libido, Husserl's *epoché,* and Heidegger's *Dasein.*

Iris Murdoch subscribes to Plato's view that man's life consists of an arduous spiritual pilgrimage from appearances—the shadows on the Cave walls—to reality—a direct view of the sun from outside the Cave. She stops short, however, of Plato's suspicion of artists and their work. Dame Iris's 1977 study of Plato, *The Fire and the Sun,* ends with a brief look at his ambivalence. "Plato feared the consolations of art. . . . To present the idea of God at all, even as myth is a consolation, since it is impossible to defend this image against the prettifying attentions of art. Art will mediate and adorn, and develop magical structures to conceal the absence of God or his distance." While *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* departs from exactly this point, it reclaims art as an indispensable means of understanding moral and religious truth, rather than a comforting distraction.

The Judeo-Christian belief in a "practical and consoling" personal God that "once seemed a prime guarantee of general morality" is fading, or so Iris Murdoch believes. In its absence, then, we desperately need a "theology that can continue without God." Whether or not we choose to call this new philosophical system "theology" or "moral philosophy," it must include "our experience of the unconditioned and our continued sense of what is holy."

Iris Murdoch blames the iconoclasm of our age—which calls into question many "old and prized unities and deep instinctive beliefs thought to be essential to human nature"—for our profoundly disturbed relationship to history, art, science, and, most important, truth and religion. The concept of the morally responsible individual is one of the age's casualties. If proof is necessary, Oxford Amnesty's gathering of world-renowned scholars to discuss in all seriousness the topic "Does the self as construed by the liberal tradition still exist? If not, whose human rights are we defending?" for the inauguration of their lecture series last year amply bears out Iris Murdoch's grave diagnosis of the state of the contemporary Western intellect and soul.

The major philosophical influences and historical factors Iris Murdoch sees as having contributed to today's moral confusion are the dominance of scientific objectivism and the separation of the realms of fact and value, systematized by Hume and culminating in the logical positivists' branding of all non-verifiable value statements as nonsense. Once moral vocabulary was eliminated from philosophical discourse and value was removed from the facts of this world, it was but a short step to the subordination of individual consciousness to inflexible, superhuman systems—sexual drives in Freudianism, society in Marxism, and language in structuralism—in which the "ghost of determinism" is not difficult to spot. Since structuralism claims that "language speaks the man," Dame Iris suggests that Linguistic Determinism would be a more appropriate name for it.

As the most recent manifestation of man's

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recurring need for the comforts of a determined fate, structuralism comes in for some harsh criticism throughout this volume. Dame Iris builds an elegant refutation of Derrida and his followers. (Although she does not distinguish between structuralism, deconstruction, and post-structuralism, her argument is based on their common assumptions about language and therefore is no less valid for being sweeping.) Her most devastating challenge to the structuralists and deconstructionists centers on their use of "truism, half-truth, and shameless metaphysics . . . to deceive us."

Of course, in an obvious sense, language transcends its user, meanings are ambiguous, words are clarified through discrimination, and so on. But the amassing of such general considerations is remote from a conclusion to the effect that "really" no final statement which can be said to be true or false is ever made.

Dame Iris admires Derrida's brilliance, but she has not been seduced by his rhetoric and language games. She insists on looking at the practical implications of his posture: "Here the severance of meaning from truth, of language from the world can be seen not only as philosophically baseless and morally intolerable, but as politically suicidal."

According to Dame Iris's metaphysical system, it is primarily through art and aesthetic experience that we can restore the weakened structures crucial to our spiritual well-being and our relationship to truth. Using Plato's imagery of Forms and their inter-relationships, she establishes a bridge between religion and moral philosophy. She then seeks to resurrect the widely disputed concept of individual consciousness as a touchstone of the transcendent. Substituting absolute Good for the Judeo-Christian God, she wants to rescue St. Anselm's Ontological Proof from Kantian skepticism. (This Proof, much simplified, accepts that an understanding of God as the most perfect being imaginable necessarily entails his existence.) To do so, Dame Iris posits that man has an innate sense of truth and falsehood and that intimations of transcendence in personal experience are a basic, irrefutable proof of the existence of an absolute Good (or God). Furthermore, she states that every act of perception is colored by implicit moral judgments. Like the structuralists, the

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philosophers in the analytic empiricist tradition who claimed their philosophical judgments were morally neutral simply did not recognize that their rejection of one moral system does not prevent it from being replaced by another, tacit one.

Iris Murdoch recognizes that she also is prey to the need for spiritual consolation. Her particular interpretation of Plato and her faith in the Ontological Proof may well result from a need "to reassure [herself] that, as [she sees] it, good is really good and real is really real." As a result she subjects her conclusions to the rigors of Wittgensteinian logic (though disobeying his injunction against speaking of the inner life), while bolstering her reliance on personal experience with support from the metaphysical truths discovered by mystics, especially Meister Eckhart, St. John of the Cross, and Simone Weil, and by great artists in their masterpieces. By emulating the calm, selfless attention that mystics bring to their contemplation and artists to their creations, we too can experience and approach the Good. While Dame Iris's arguments here may not be, in the strict sense, philosophically convincing, they are engaging.

There are repetition, occasional slow spots, and even some lapses in the generally brilliant philosophical monologue that is *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals.* "Void," a rather fuzzy chapter on despair and spiritual affliction seems brought in as a last-minute reality check to these essentially optimistic philosophical views. And yet, this void, which Iris Murdoch sees as a symbol of spiritual suffering, does not quite rescue her moral-religious system from the sentimentality of such statements as "We are all artists and thinkers. We are all poets," or "Teaching art is teaching morals." The inevitable, and by now clichéd, image of concentration camp guards listening to Beethoven and reading Goethe immediately springs to mind.

Iris Murdoch is one of the rare intellectuals who can engage complex and sophisticated philosophical constructs in eloquent and unfailingly lucid prose. Her digressions are as stimulating as her main arguments. Her reflections on tragedy and some of her tangential speculations—why Shakespeare did not use Arthurian legends for his plays; how "psychoanalysis has come to share the tasks of religion both as therapy and theology"; or how the predominance of the visual over the other four senses leaves us more vulnerable than we realize to the morally blunting effect of daily images of violence on television—come very close to stealing the show.

Many stages along this guided tour of Western philosophy, with short excursions into Eastern religions, remain in mind long after the journey is finished. But what rescues *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* from mere picturesque philosophical tourism is Iris Murdoch's assumption that her readers approach questions of moral value with as much urgency as she does. "The appeal to evidence, to reports of experience, and to the direct experience of the reader, is precarious, but is in some regions of philosophy not only the last resort but the proper and best move."

Significant Other

G. H. LEWES: A LIFE. *By Rosemary Ashton. Oxford University Press. $45.*

Reviewed by RICHARD JONES

One of the liveliest descriptions of George Henry Lewes was written by Charles Eliot Norton after a visit to Lewes and George Eliot in their north London home: "Lewes received us at the door with characteristic animation; he looks and moves like an old-fashioned French barber or dancing master, very ugly, very vivacious, very entertaining. You expect him to take up his fiddle and begin to play."

This was in 1869. A generation earlier, John Stuart Mill, who befriended Lewes in his early days in London, told the (very staid) editor of the *Edinburgh Review* that Lewes was not a "coxcomb" but, on the contrary, possessed "bouyancy of spirit" and a willingness to undertake "anything for which he feels he has the slightest vocation (however much it may be really beyond his strength) only because he does not care at all for failure."

Most observers commented on Lewes's odd appearance, but all agreed that his vivacity of temperament made his ugliness unimportant; others, Mrs. Gaskell was one, found his exuberance bordering on "familiarity of manner"

✪ RICHARD JONES is a Welsh novelist.

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and preferred not to have anything to do with him.

As everyone knows, his great conquest was Marian Evans, the high-minded translator of German biblical criticism and the brain behind the *Westminster Review*, one of London's leading intellectual magazines. The two set up house together, although Lewes was still married (and unable to get a divorce because he had condoned his wife's adultery with Leigh Hunt's son).

There was surprise and scandalized dismay both in Miss Evans's own family back in the Midlands and in London intellectual circles, where Lewes enjoyed a reputation as a ladies' man who spoke overly freely about his adventures. But the relationship lasted twenty-five years and was a triumphant example of what men and women are supposed to be to each other.

In their life together Lewes provided Marian Evans with what the novelist Mrs. Oliphant called a "mental greenhouse" within which, with Lewes as spiritual midwife, George Eliot was born. No one was more aware of what she owed to Lewes than the triumphant novelist herself.

The manuscript of *Adam Bede*, the novel that earned Miss Evans a small fortune, was dedicated to Lewes as a "book which would never have been written but for the happiness which his love has conferred on my life." In the same year, 1859, she wrote to a Swiss friend that, "under the influence of the intense happiness that I have enjoyed in my married life from thorough moral and intellectual sympathy, I have at last found out my true vocation."

Because of his role in the nurturing and protection of the great novelist, Lewes has had, on the whole, a good press. But as time passed, his own achievements in several fields—his interests were truly protean—were brushed aside so that, when a sympathetic life of Lewes was published in 1983, it was entitled *Mr George Eliot: A Biography of George Henry Lewes*. This was, unintentionally, demeaning to Lewes as a man and unfair to him as a writer and progressive, open-minded spirit.

Now Rosemary Ashton, a reader in English at University College London, has devoted a meticulously researched volume to Lewes's life that offers critical appraisals of his works. She is already known as the editor of a selection of

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Lewes's critical writings and has devoted a study to the way German thought was received in Britain in the first sixty years of the nineteenth century. Lewes, of course, was one of the leading authorities on German writers and did as much as anyone to make their works known to the reading public.

Ashton's book is fair-minded and scrupulous if a little dense with quotation and cross-reference, and it fills in many details about Lewes's origins and early life that had not been known until now. I doubt if the book alters anyone's perceptions of the man except to recognize that some of his writings are undoubtedly worth reviving and that, in his personal life, he was more vulnerable than we had supposed: plagued for many years by poverty and family responsibilities.

Ashton gives us a good deal of detail about Lewes's children, a lively and affectionate lot, who accepted Marian Evans without any qualms. The oldest son, Charles Lee Lewes, was a true friend to her and even supported her marriage to John Walter Cross after what seemed to many an indecently short time after Lewes's death. The son seems to have been blessed with his father's open-mindedness and lack of prejudice.

The Lewes family is hard to place within the English class system. The first member who enters into the story is Charles Lee Lewes, a comic actor, who also wrote about the stage. He was Lewes's grandfather. He married three times. One of his sons, John Lee Lewes, wrote melancholy poetry, of which he published two slim volumes, and established two families, one legitimate, the other not. George Henry Lewes was one of the three illegitimate children; he was born in 1817.

John Lee Lewis suddenly left both families and emigrated to Bermuda. George Henry Lewes was told his father had died. The abandoned common-law wife and her three children were rescued when she married a sea captain who was not liked by his stepchildren, but he seems, although the evidence is lacking, to have been the man who took them to live in France and Jersey. There George Henry Lewes learned to speak French like a native and may well have picked up the lively manner that set him aside from his emotionally constipated compatriots.

Lewes was a born intellectual with a love of ideas—Comte, Michelet, and George Sand were among his early enthusiasms—which is the more remarkable when it is remembered that his formal education was quite sketchy. He was also of a liberal, if not radical, turn of mind; and when, after some false starts in commerce and medicine, he resolved to live by his pen, he got in touch with Leigh Hunt and that small group of non-conventional thinkers who were, with varying degrees of commitment, anti-Christian, anti-monarchist, and believers in free love. These were people about as far-out as one could be in the first half of the nineteenth century in London and a source of scandal to the unco guid.

Lewes married the daughter of a member of Parliament, Agnes Swynfen, who gave him three sons and then had four more by Thornton Hunt. Throughout all these emotional entanglements, which leave the reader slightly breathless, and the pressures of family responsibilities, Lewes contributed to the leading journals of the day and wrote on almost any topic that seized his imagination. He spoke French, German, Spanish, and Italian and wrote the first life of Goethe. Literary and theatrical criticism, two novels, a play, and several adaptations for the stage, as well as a four-volume history of philosophy and studies of individual philosophers, were among his output. When the scientific discoveries that were taking place during Lewes's lifetime interested him, he taught himself to use the microscope and became one of the first popularizers of what might be called the wonders of science in an age when mainstream culture was deeply suspicious of the subject. It is impossible to think of a British writer whose work and interests covered so many fields.

What is more, his achievements still stand. His life of Goethe is still very well regarded. George Bernard Shaw said Lewes's dramatic criticism was the best written between that by Hazlitt and by himself; and his history of philosophy was still used by students within living memory. Carlyle named him "the Prince of journalists," and it could well be said that Lewes was the founding father of all newspaper columns. His output and enthusiasms are breathtaking.

What sets Lewes apart from the men and women of his time and makes him so sympathetic to us was his freedom from prejudice and sententious Victorian cant. Surrounded by stuffy, emotionally parched university men

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and pompous editors, Lewes maintained a freedom of thought that seems almost miraculous, given the spirit of the times. He was not a political man and was hardly ever involved in the public events of the day, but he understood the way the nineteenth century was tending and he grasped, better than most, how George Eliot's work as a novelist would create a new standard by which fiction would be written and appraised.

Naturally, for a man who covered so many fields, Lewes aroused the enmity of specialists. This was when Lewes, whose education had been by scholarly standards hit and miss, showed his one sore spot: his lack of credentials. On one or two occasions he entered into controversy over scientific matters—once with Charles Dickens, a friend, over whether a character in *Bleak House* could possibly, by the known laws of physics, have died of internal combustion.

These mid-Victorian controversies today have a quaint and dated air, and this is where Ashton shows her true reserve: she never makes fun of the arguments, although at times it must have been hard not to do so. She also plays the fuss over the Lewes-Eliot ménage as straight as can be. There is, all the same, something truly absurd about it to our eyes. Here was Victorian England choking at the idea of sitting down to dine with a great woman novelist because she was not legally wedded to the man in her life. What could be more grotesque than this gap between the larger amorality of Victorian hypocrisy and the herring-bone-in-the-throat of the bedchamber?

Lewes, who as George Sand said, was more French in his temperament than English, understood the absurdity and hypocrisy of all this but played with a straight bat in order to protect George Eliot, grievously aware of her difficult position. There is no evidence that Lewes ever challenged the rules of the game openly, and he continued to dine out while George Eliot remained at home, an exile from the tables of those who were, in every respect, her inferiors. But he remained faithful to her.

Lewes and Eliot often escaped from this stuffy atmosphere to the freedom and stimulation of the Continent and, in London, they went to lectures and concerts together. They entertained a selected few people at home but in the early days of their friendship there was always a hint of social bravado among the

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women who visited the Lewes-Eliot household. In the end, genius and fame prevailed and, after being taken up by the Amberleys, the aristocratic forebears of Bertrand Russell, the imprimatur came in 1872 when Princess Louise, Queen Victoria's daughter, asked to be presented to George Eliot.

Lewes died of enteritis when he was sixty-one. Within a short time Eliot had married John Walter Cross, a man twenty-one years her junior. Ashton gives Eliot's short afterlife in an epilogue that is rather too restrained. Eliot's new husband threw himself into the canal while they were on their honeymoon in Venice. Eliot herself was criticized by the Comtists, who had recognized her relationship with Lewes as a true marriage but also—inconveniently, in the circumstances—believed that widowhood was for all time. Poor George Eliot, even when she made herself "respectable," she still received a brickbat or two.

After Lewes died, George Eliot wrote nothing more. But there was only about a year between his death and hers. Cross respected the first relationship and buried Eliot beside Lewes in Highgate Cemetery.

The Collector

ESSAYS. BY BÉLA BARTÓK. *Edited by Benjamin Suchoff. University of Nebraska Press. $19.95.*

Reviewed by WILFRID MELLERS

Bartók's status among the elect immortals of twentieth-century music is now assured; he is accepted as a classic, as well as a onetime progressive, whose news "stays news." He has not quite the international celebrity accorded to Stravinsky who, twice deracinated, is the quintessential representative of our global culture; nor is he, like Schönberg, an artist-theorist-prophet who invented or evolved a new technique of, or at least a new approach to, composition that he (erroneously) believed would decide the destiny of European music for the foreseeable future. Still less was he, like John Cage, a clown-saint-priest who re-conceived the very idea of what a composer might be.

But if Bartók remained a traditional kind of composer, he was innovative as well as evolutionary, his centrality being implicit in his relationship to the three European masters he most admired—Bach, Beethoven, and Debussy. In this triumvirate, Bach—supreme European composer of a faith manifest in the continuity, consistency, and unity of his musical process—represents the past; Beethoven—arch-promulgator of Western will and Faustian ego, manifest in the progress of his developmental sonatas—represents the unfolding present; while Debussy—artist of the sensory moment, manifest in the immediacy of his static harmony, non-developing structures, and (often pentatonic) linear patterns—represents a potential future. A magical synthesis of the unity of Bachian counterpoint, the duality of Beethovenian sonata, and the sensuous pluralism of Debussy is evident in all Bartók's finest music—throughout the string quartets, for instance, and supremely in the *Music for Strings, Celesta and Percussion.*

Both Schönberg and Cage, though polar opposites, turned to words in order to promulgate their ideas. Stravinsky, if not himself a prolific word spinner, intermittently emitted aphorisms intended to shock, while in later life he had in Robert Craft an industrious, devoted, and intelligent Boswell to act as sponsor for the Stravinskian cause. Most reasonably aware music lovers will have read, or will be intending one day to read, their written words, while being unlikely to tackle Bartók's, for the obvious reason that he, being no proselytizer, for the most part left his music to speak for itself. The only musical cause that deeply concerned him was the fate of the indigenous folk art of the Hungarian people and of sundry central European peoples allied to them.

Although these peasant musics were, in the early years of the century, far more vigorous, less ravaged by incipient industrialization, than were the British folk musics on which Cecil Sharp as sound archaeologist along with such composers as Vaughan Williams, Holst, and Grainger were attempting a desperate rescue operation, they too were affected by the corrupting ravages of time. There was an old tradition of Hungarian folk music, mostly made by illiterate peasants and therefore exclusively oral; this monodic music was basically

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✪ WILFRID MELLERS is the author of *Bach and the Dance of God, Beethoven and the Voice of God,* and *François Couperin and the French Classical Tradition.*

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pentatonic, sometimes expanded to heptatonic Aeolian, Dorian, or Mixolydian modality, and was rhythmically free, based on the spoken or chanted word, and often melismatically ornamented in ways that link up with Turkish and Asiatic styles. There was also a new tradition of folk music, relished especially by young people. This was melodically more diatonic, though still suspicious of our harmonically oriented tonality, and was rhythmically more dance-dominated and therefore susceptible to the influence of Western art-musics imported from towns and cities. In these rural-urban interfusions, the catalysts were the gypsies.

What, throughout the nineteenth century—and this includes the well-known Hungarian rhapsodies of Liszt and the Hungarian dances of Brahms—was thought of as Hungarian music was in fact not folk music at all but was composed light music created by upper-middle-class amateurs for their own delectation. It was performed by gypsy professional musicians, presumably because *playing* music was considered a low activity. Traces of Asiatic inheritance probably surfaced in the gypsies' singing and playing, though the augmented seconds prevalent in their melodies were already corny clichés, as they still are in the playing of Hungarian café orchestras.

These three levels—"pure," ancient, Magyar peasant culture; the modified rural-urban culture relished by the young; and the hybrid gypsy culture somewhere between folk music and what we would call pop—were co-existent. What is remarkable about Bartók's work as folklorist is the range he covered. Whereas his friend and colleague Kodály confined himself to his native Hungary, Bartók embraced the folk music of Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Turkey, collecting nearly ten thousand melodies from the Bulgarian area alone. In consistently advocating the truth as well as the beauty of the old as compared with the new, Bartók was more of a purist, even a puritan, than is now, in our pluralistic society, fashionable. But this does not invalidate the grandeur of his achievement. Although he was not the first to collect Central European folk songs, it was he, along with Kodály, who established standards of scientific precision and artistic insight that are still unrivaled. The (obvious) reason is that he was himself a great creative musician, who cared enough to want accuracy; he succeeded in a

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self-appointed task to which he probably devoted more time than he did to his composition—often laboring, over so vast a field, in geographically hazardous terrain, in the teeth of sometimes hostile peasants, who feared lest the formidable phonographic machine, having gobbled up their voices, might make off with them for bad and all. Primitive superstition may well have displayed not only poetic (if specious) logic but also, in the long run, a measure of hard truth—as Bartók himself bitterly foresaw.

Almost all that is of value in Bartók's written words, which run to well over five hundred pages, concerns his studies in folk music, presented in prefaces to his collections, or published in learned periodicals, either while he was working "in the field," or retrospectively. People who love music but suspect that Bartók's writings, as compared with those of Schönberg, Stravinsky, or Cage, must be too specialized for them should think again, for Bartók's insights into ostensibly alien primitive cultures prove that they are potently relevant to us—perhaps more so now than they were when, in the first three decades of the century, they were written, alongside Bartók's most powerfully original compositions. Bartók was fascinated by Central European folk musics because they suggested means of liberation from Western academic traditions that had become moribund. Of course all over Europe the multi-modality of folk song offered release from (mostly Teutonic) harmonic straitjackets; no cultures, however, offered materials as rich, varied, and well preserved as those that Bartók presented in forms at once authentic and creatively stimulating.

That this is not merely a musical, let alone a musicological, matter is most vividly revealed in the music's rhythmic dimensions, as is evident in the famous essay "On the So-called Bulgarian Rhythm." What was once considered the oddity of these assymetrical rhythms proves to be, in Bartók's account, "the most natural thing in the world," not because Bulgarians (or the many other folk who caper to these rhythms) are all peg-legged, but because people who live in their bodies' gestures will be especially venturesome. Western man, long dominated by Time's pendulum, will tend to move in symmetrically divisible groupings of twos and fours, or of threes in duple groupings; organic man, living in present moments, will dance and sing in fives, sevens, nines, and elevens as readily as in metrically divisible numbers, and will especially relish eight units impartially divided as 3 + 3 + 2, or 2 + 2 + 3, or 3 + 2 + 3.

In Bartók's European-composing years highly proficient orchestras couldn't cope with these rhythms when encountered in the works of Bartók or Stravinsky, though to peasant musicians they were literally child's play. Nowadays, orchestral musicians are no longer scared of them, partly because experience has rendered them familiar, but also because the values illiterate peasants danced to and lived by are now recognized as having their own truth. We are less self-confident than we used to be, admitting that technical evolutions are inevitably also ways of life. We may see this in Bartók's accounts of the relationships between his folk-song arrangements and his original compositions, in which melody and rhythm—and often by inference quasi-percussive harmony—reflect folk idioms while not directly quoting folk tunes.

The scholarly core of Bartók's ethno-musicological writings is backed by polemical sec-

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tions—mostly answers to nit-picking scholars who refused to believe that mere peasants could know better than those who considered themselves knowledgeable. The fatuity of some of these multi-ethnic dissensions would be difficult to credit, were we not today witnessing, in these regions, multi-ethnic savageries far more disastrous in outcome, though hardly less irrational in initiation. The violence of these musicological exchanges makes for lively reading, since no professor ends up dead and bloodied. Bartók remains dignified in bearing, indomitable in passionate lucidity. But his real answer to frenzy is the powerful sanity of his music, which ought to be able to salve today's idiot political imbroglios—though one knows that, alas, it couldn't.

Still, Bartók's polemical writings are not all rebarbative. He pays magnificent homage to Milman Parry's epochal work on reconstituting Yugoslav sagas that are collateral to Homer—from which we have learned much about how epic poetry-and-song functioned. His accounts of folk instruments eschew disputation in being merely, but fascinatingly, descriptive. Throughout, Bartók writes pithily and pungently and is well served by Benjamin Suchoff's translations. The brief program notes that Bartók wrote for his own works are not all worth the carrying, and a few youthful concert reviews are of interest only because Bartók wrote them. At this date it hardly matters that his comments on, say, Strauss or Delius are an odd medley of perspicuity and naïveté, since Bartók didn't profess to be a critic, having better ways to occupy his time. This fine, substantial, well-produced volume reveals that throughout his hardworking, music-dedicated life Bartók was a wonderful friend and a formidable enemy, equally impressive on both counts.

I cannot resist ending with his rebuff to the Kisfaludy Society, which, in 1936, twenty-four years too late, awarded him the Greguss Medal for his opus 1. Bartók concludes his letter with some "friendly advice": "It is urgent that you appoint another adviser in this matter. How can someone judge the value of a work, who is unable to decide, on account of external chronological conditions, which works are to be considered? In conclusion may I declare that I do not wish to accept the Greguss Medal in the present or the future, alive or dead."

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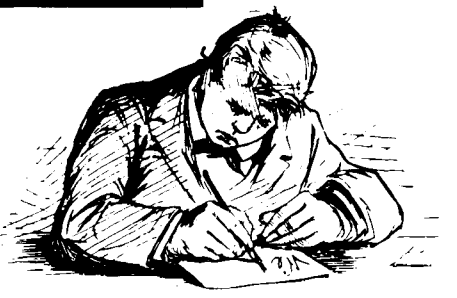

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The Reader Replies

Defining Deviancy Down

In 1992 there were 2,589 homicides in Los Angeles County, a rate of 28 per 100,000 inhabitants, compared with 766 in the whole of Canada, a rate of 3 per 100,000. Discussing such obscene statistics, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan in "Defining Deviancy Down" (AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Winter 1993) broadly hints at how they might be effectively remedied. He writes of the "Valentine's Day massacre" of 1929, when four gangsters gunned down nine rivals: "The nation was shocked. . . . It would appear that the society of the 1920s was simply not willing to put up with this degree of deviancy. In the end, the Constitution was amended, and Prohibition, which lay behind so much gangster violence, was ended."

A great thing about the United States Constitution is that, if experience shows a provision in it to have been ill conceived, it can be rectified. In the years before 1919, "temperance" organizations issued a flood of propaganda that persuaded, or intimidated, legislators to pass the Eighteenth Amendment. After a decade of suffering its effects, the voting public demanded and, with a sigh of relief, finally secured its repeal.

As we all know, the proliferation of handguns, responsible for so much homicide, is vociferously supported by a "special interest" group, the National Rifle Association, which rests its case on the Second Amendment, "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." Like some other articles in the so-called Bill of Rights—a popular, not an official, name for the first ten amendments—it owes much to an English statute of 1689, also popularly called "the Bill of Rights." How great the debt could be can be seen by comparing the wording of the Eighth Amendment with that in the English Act: "Excessive bail ought not to be required nor excessive fines imposed nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." Many declarations in the English document stem from grievances against the deposed King James II. He was said to have "quartered soldiers contrary to law." Hence the obsolete Third Amendment, about quartering soldiers on civilians, something highly unlikely to occur nowadays.

The Second Amendment seems to owe its inspiration to, first, the charge that the Roman Catholic James caused "several good subjects being Protestants to be disarmed at the same time Papists were both armed and employed contrary to law," so that the Act affirms the right "That the subjects which are Protestants may have arms for their defence suitable to their conditions and as allowed by law"; second, James's alleged use of the standing (permanent) army to intimidate Parliament, so that the Act reads, "The raising or keeping a standing army . . . in time of peace unless it be with consent of Parliament is against law." For decades, the English, remembering Cromwell's success in using his New Model Army to establish a dictatorship, tried to believe that a local militia of "weekend soldiers" could fulfill the nation's defense needs. But surely, to cite one of many recent grisly incidents in Los Angeles, even the NRA would hardly argue, "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of a fourteen-year-old girl to possess a handgun in order to murder her 'too strict' father shall not be infringed." The strictness consisted of his objecting to her skipping school and going to live with her "boyfriend."

The host of NRA members who regularly send floods of letters to newspapers whenever stricter gun controls are urged warn that the constitutionally guaranteed rights of Americans may be thus jeopardized. It is well to recall that, in the past, such rights have sometimes, with general consent, been rescinded—notably the right to own slaves, recognized in Articles I, Sec. 2(3) and IV, Sec. 3, of the Constitution. These sections remain in the text, but are overridden by

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the Thirteenth Amendment. If outright repeal of the Second Amendment, the most obvious solution, seems likely to cause too great a furor, its dangerous teeth could be drawn by adopting a new Amendment 27: "For the prevention of crime, Congress and the legislatures of the States may make laws regulating the manufacture, importation, and distribution of firearms and other potentially lethal or disabling materials." If some brave and far-sighted legislator—perhaps Senator Moynihan?—were to introduce it, surely such a Gun Control Amendment (GCA) would instantly draw support so overwhelming that even the well-organized forces of the NRA could not hope to counter it.

DONALD GREENE
Los Angeles, California

Psychiatric Misadventures

As Chairman of the American Psychiatric Association, DSM-IV Subcommittee on Gender Identity Disorders, I feel it is important to comment on the erroneous understanding conveyed by Dr. Paul R. McHugh regarding individuals with gender identity disorders in his essay "Psychiatric Misadventures," which appeared in the Autumn 1992 AMERICAN SCHOLAR. Although undoubtedly the way in which this disorder has become manifest is partially affected by the cultural climate and the availability of sex reassignment surgery, it is another issue to suggest, as Dr. McHugh does, that this is not, in fact, a disorder that can be appropriately treated through sex reassignment surgery.

His overall lack of information about this disorder is quickly manifest in his first example of the married man who was a transvestite. Although some transvestitic men may request sex reassignment surgery, they constitute the subgroup of patients with the least good outcome. To cite this as his primary example of individuals with Gender Identity Disorder simply indicates that he is not well versed in this area. Dr. McHugh is quite right in stating that just because sex reassignment surgery is available does not mean that it should be done. Responsible psychiatrists working in specialty clinics have for a number of years been highly conservative in their choice of cases for sex reassignment, ensuring that efforts are made to explore all options fully before surgical and hormonal reassignment is instituted.

Dr. McHugh claims that the zeal for sex-change surgery did not derive from critical reasoning or thoughtful assessments. Gender identity clinics generally follow very strict guidelines with respect to assessments and, as indicated above, are highly conservative for the most part in recommending reassignment. Unquestionably, there are pressures to provide assessments that give the patient what he or she wants, but the role of the clinics for a number of years has been to ensure that everything is done to explore other options and especially to ensure that the individual has an adequate sense of living as the opposite sex. In addition to extensive psychological and psychiatric assessment, a requirement in all responsible clinics is that the individual live as the opposite sex for at least two years prior to surgery. This is hardly doing what you want.

It is also clear that Dr. McHugh has spent little time in talking to or assessing these patients himself. He has a rather flippant and superficial understanding of the intensity of feeling and the way in which that feeling has become an integral part of the self for those individuals with a gender identity disorder. Efforts to work psychotherapeutically with many of these patients have failed to produce a significant change and oftentimes despite a reasonable dynamic understanding of the origins of their disorder individuals with gender identity disorder are extremely reluctant to give up their solution to their inner dilemma. Denying surgery where other options have been explored and found wanting is to condemn the patient to a life of chronic gender uncertainty and in so doing to impede other aspects of development.

Dr. McHugh does both himself and the profession a real disservice to speak so judgmentally from such an inadequate base of experience. Many people are dependent on the surgery and have been able to achieve a more satisfying existence as a result of being able to have reassignment. Dr. McHugh's comments in a well regarded journal such as this will improperly inflame public debate and undoubtedly make life more difficult for those few individuals who require sex reassignment surgery.

These opinions are my own and should not be taken to reflect an official position of the American Psychiatric Association, the University of Toronto, or the Hospital for Sick Children.

SUSAN J. BRADLEY, M.D.
Department of Psychiatry
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

PAUL R. MCHUGH replies: Dr. Bradley's letter defending sex change surgery illustrates the kind of thought that intermittently sends psychiatry out along a misdirected path. Most doctors recommending a mutilating procedure would provide answers to the following ques-

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tions: What is the nature of the condition for which this desperate treatment is the cure? Is it something simple like a wish for curly hair, straighter teeth or a smaller nose? Or is it an expression of a mental disease, a set of delusions, *an overvalued idea, a disorder of mind in* which a poorly appreciated but deeply rooted conflict with reality seeks an illusionary solution? What other psychiatric conditions resemble it, and have surgical approaches that accept the deranged premises of those conditions proven effective? What is the evidence that this is a life-long disorder that will always persist until life ends if this particular treatment is denied? What are the criteria for success, for failure? In other words, upon what reasoning and data does this practice rest?

I think it telling that Dr. Bradley avoided this approach in rebutting me because the attempt to answer such questions has led many to conclude that the treatment is unsound. Out of a longer experience than any other center in North America (pace Dr. Bradley), we drew such a conclusion at Johns Hopkins and stopped performing sex change surgery more than a decade ago. We were and remain well aware of the "intensity of feeling" of the patients, but came to realize that the focus of therapy should be on those feelings and not on refashioning the genitalia.

Dr. Bradley contends that I do a "disservice to speak judgmentally" here. But, with all due respect, judgment is the issue. A want of it helped produce this misadventure and—on the evidence of her letter—continues to characterize its defense.

Hair Piece

Reading Aristides' column in the Winter 1993 issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR brings to mind my one and only personal encounter with John Wayne, the late film actor.

Some years ago, when I was serving as consultant at the Scripps Clinic in La Jolla, I was asked to stop by the hospital room to which John Wayne had been admitted for the purpose of a "check-up." Apparently, he had mentioned to his attending physician a minor digestive upset, regarding which my opinion was sought.

Responding to my knock on the door with a hearty "C'mon in!" was a huge, grinning, amiable fellow whom I readily recognized from my recollection of his image on the movie screen, except for one thing: his bald pate. We had a friendly chat, in the course of which he described his petty stomach complaint.

Thereupon I informed him that in order to properly proceed with examination it would be necessary for us to go to my office in the adjacent clinic. He readily agreed, but asked, "Can you give me just a minute?" I nodded assent, and he lumbered into his bathroom from which he soon emerged, adjusting a tousled toupee he had donned. His explanation for the delay: "We just might meet someone in the hallway who'd be disappointed if I wasn't wearing my actor's hat. No one was disappointed.

WILLIAM S. HAUBRICH, M.D., F.A.C.P.
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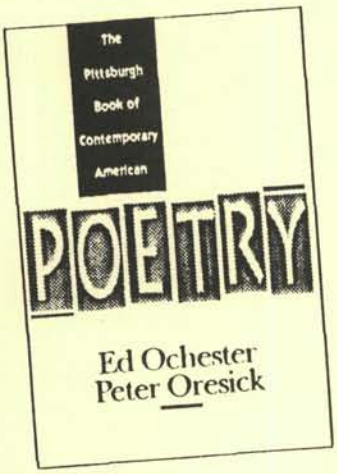

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